



6th January 2021

Dear parent/carer,

You will be aware that over the last day or so there have been seismic changes in the country's approach to tackling Covid-19. One of these has seen the partial closure of schools (to all but vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers). This is obviously a situation nobody wanted but we are determined to navigate our way through it and ensure that your son/daughter gets the education that he/she deserves.

One of the positive things about repeated lockdowns (if I can say that!) is that you get better at it. We felt as if we were 'thrown into' the initial one, from March 2020, at short notice. Whilst we did our best, there were gaps. An example is remote learning – it was the first time we had done such a thing for a high number of pupils and, whilst there were some real success stories, we have worked to improve it considerably. It now includes live streaming of lessons and quality assurance processes as standard. We are well placed to ensure your child's education – whilst admittedly not as good compared to him/her being in school each day, every day – can continue without interruption. For this, as usual, we will need your support.

Therefore you should all be aware that all students not in school must engage with remote learning online via Microsoft Teams. They should follow their normal timetable joining their live streamed lessons each day and completing the work set.

Attendance is compulsory for all year groups and we will be following up non-attendance robustly. All children nationally have missed far too much education and it is crucial that our students do not miss out on further learning. We understand that there may be some challenges with technology and throughout the various lockdowns we have been working to support families in achieving this. Students can attend their lessons using any device such as a phone or laptop, so we hope that the vast majority are able to do so and we ask that you contact us urgently if there are any issues with this.

The government guidance is clear that students not engaging with remote learning will be classed as vulnerable and should therefore attend school. The pastoral team will be closely monitoring attendance to remote learning and will be contacting parents if their child is consistently not engaging.

If you are in receipt of free school meals we will also ensure that you get the required vouchers in due course.

Important – Year 11 message

As an examination year group, Y11 students were initially being prioritised by the government with regard to attendance. The lockdown announcement states that the government does not think *'it is possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly'* (more information to follow when we have it).

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Whatever the alternative arrangements are, it is imperative that these students realise that the work they complete between now and the end of their course will be all important. It is essential that they participate fully with our remote offering and ensure that we have the evidence to award them the grades that their ability and endeavor deserve. This cannot be overstated and will be emphasised repeatedly in our communications.

We will be holding a live assembly with year 11 students on Thursday at 10.50am on Teams to bring the year group together and explain in more detail what we know at this stage and re-emphasise the expectations.

Finally, I wish you and your family good health and happiness as we move into the New Year and hopefully see things slowly start to improve for us all.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. H. Marsh', followed by a period.

Rob Marsh
Principal