

12th January 2021

Dear Parents,

I am writing to give further details regarding our Remote Learning provision. It has been fantastic to see how quickly the pupils and staff have adapted, with very little time to prepare.

As we stated last week, we have been assessing the timetable and have now produced a Remote Learning timetable that we will use with effect from tomorrow. Your son/daughter's class timetable is attached to this email and is also available to view on SeeSaw (for Years 3-4) and Firefly (for Years 5-8). If you have any queries, please direct them to your child's Form Tutor who will be able to support you in the first instance.

Taunton School teachers will work together with families to ensure continuity of education for all of our pupils throughout this period of disruption. We will carry on realising the school's vision of 'Challenge, Nurture, Inspire' and add value to every pupil at every stage.

We are mindful of the worry that many members of the Taunton School community are experiencing during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. We recognise that returning to remote teaching and learning may be hard at first and we have changed some school structures to assist with this.

Safeguarding

The wellbeing of our students and staff remains our absolute priority. As we saw during the Summer Term, working remotely can have many benefits and definitely increased pupil's resilience and independence. However, social isolation is hard and clearly, the vast majority of our pupils would be happier being in school and experiencing face to face learning and being able to be with their friends. To this end, every decision we have made about Remote Learning has been made with their wellbeing in mind and we have ensured that pupils have many opportunities to interact with their Form Tutor and discuss any concerns they may have.

Each pupil will receive a group or individual call from their Form Tutor each week, as well as engaging in daily registration and weekly form time as usual. The decisions we have made around the timetable and the shape of the day will also reflect this focus on wellbeing: we need to manage time on screens and ensure pupils all have the opportunity to get outside and enjoy their interests away from digital devices.

Having reviewed our Remote Learning provision, we do feel that expecting pupils to turn their cameras on does have significant benefits to both their social interaction and to their learning. Most teachers will therefore expect this. In the past we have been concerned about safeguarding with pupils in their bedrooms but with 'Together Now', an update on TEAMS, we can mute their backgrounds. However, we are aware that some pupils struggle with bandwidth (so they cannot use their cameras) or they are anxious about this. As ever, we will work with pupils, and with you as parents to optimise this experience and Form Tutors remain the key person to liaise with.

During the last lockdown, some pupils did find their mental health was affected and I hope that these additional action points will help everyone to stay safe over the next few weeks.

- Teachers will be given additional guidance around safeguarding.
- Form Tutors will “see” their tutees at the start of each day.
- Our fantastic Health Centre and Mental Health Practitioners will continue to work throughout lockdown and any pupil can access this support directly through their Form Tutor or PHoY.
- Our co-curricular provision will continue to allow pupils and members of staff to connect in areas which they love and enjoy. This was hugely successful last summer, and we will continue to invest time, breadth and excellence into this vital area of school life.

Promoting good behaviour

Our policies continue to be aimed at promoting and rewarding good behaviour, whether in school or learning remotely. Our existing pastoral structures will remain and the first point of contact will be the Form Tutor. Where necessary, the Pastoral Head of Year is also available, as are all members of the SMT. Therefore teachers will continue to use our existing rewards (and sanctions) to support teaching and learning and personal development.

The ‘Shape of the Day’/Timetable and Academic Provision

Remote teaching and learning has three elements:

- Workflow i.e. the teacher sets tasks for pupils, issues them with supportive materials to enable them to do the task and return their work for marking and feedback.
- The ‘live lesson’ i.e. teacher interaction with the class.
- General subject awareness and enjoyment.

Our Virtual Learning Environments (Firefly for Years 5–8) and (Seesaw for Years 3&4) are already embedded in school life and will therefore be the vehicles for remote workflow. Your teachers will be using all the functionality of Firefly/Seesaw so that pupils receive as much of their work and feedback as possible in one place.

The ‘live’ element of lessons (Years 5 – 8 only) will be delivered through Microsoft Teams. 10-15 minutes is the target length of the ‘live’ element within a 30 minute period. Too much video calling will lead to fatigue. For Years 3&4, lessons will be pre-recorded and uploaded to Seesaw. The teachers will be available for ‘live’ support during the lesson, as required.

Timetable

From previous experience, shorter lessons with clear gaps between them lead to better outcomes for all. We have compressed the school week, moving Saturday lessons into the week.

Lessons will be 30 minutes in length with 10 minute breaks. Please see attached copy of our ‘Remote Shape of the Week’ and copies of year group timetables which will come into effect from **Wednesday 13th January**.

You will note that ICT and PSHE have been taken out of the weekly timetable for most year groups and will form part of the Saturday Enrichment programme, where pupils will be able to access a range of activities, tasks and well-being activities linked to these subjects as well as other areas of school life. Where year groups do have a PSHE/Wellbeing provision in their timetable, this will not be a taught lesson but an opportunity for pupils to engage in some of the activities on the well-being pages.

Prep

There will be no prep set for pupils in Years 3-8. A revised assessment and reporting schedule will be issued once the new timetable is up and running.

Students in different time zones

If you are in a different time zone and cannot access timetabled lessons because they are too early in the morning or too late at night, do not worry. The work for the lesson will be on Firefly and your teacher will record the lesson on Teams so that you can access it at a time which works for you. Your teacher will liaise with you about how and when to submit the work, and what 1:1 catch-up opportunities are available should you require them.

Marking and feedback; rewards and sanctions

Pupils work will be marked and fed back on as it was before, but there will be differences e.g. your teacher may give you audio feedback if appropriate. Teachers will be checking in on their pupils work frequently. House points, Rolls of Honour and Learner of the Week certificates will be given as normal and pupils should record these in their planners. Form Tutors will be in regular contact with subject teachers, to ensure students are engaging and will make contact with home if they have concerns about engagement with Remote Learning.

Educational Progress (EP)

Lessons will continue largely as normal. 1:1 lessons will happen via Teams. Microsoft has some excellent accessibility features for example the 'Immersive Reader' function in One Note which will read text aloud and can be adapted to suit the listener in terms of speed and volume. The latest dictation software is also excellent. Most tablets and laptops have an 'accessibility' area in the 'settings' folder which will allow the user to adapt the screen colour/brightness/font etc. to their needs.

EAL Provision

All 1:1 and small group EAL lessons will continue as normal. Mrs Ashmore will communicate with individual pupils and parents with regards to revised slots in response to the new timetable.

Co-curricular Activities

A full complement of co-curricular options will continue throughout Remote Learning. We have planned activities to enable a break from screens and an opportunity for pupils to get outdoors in the daylight. After school, live clubs will also be available with timings to follow. This will again give downtime to the pupils and an opportunity to try something different. There will also be a number of activities and challenges which will be posted for pupils to complete in their own time on Firefly or Seesaw.

Our Performing Arts Cafés will take place with pupils submitting videos of themselves playing and, once again, they are being co-ordinated by Mrs Hornsby and Mr Baker.

Core PE and Games lessons will be operating - a variety of tasks and some live activity sessions, at all levels, for pupils to immerse themselves in. In addition, there is a weekly cooking task run by our sports staff. Hopefully you will have received a letter about the Distance Challenge for the whole family to take part in with a staff and parents' team versus the pupils. Meetings for Sports Scholars will continue on a Saturday morning and pupils will be contacted through their Teams channel.

Music ensembles will also continue as we again look to create online performances. There will be a Music Scholars Meeting on Saturday mornings at 9.00am. In addition to this, there will be a range of enrichment opportunities that pupils can access in their own time. These are for all pupils in Years 3-8 and cover different subject areas. These can be found on our Enrichment Page and will be available at the end of the week.

Once we settle into remote learning, we will be in touch with a survey to assess how the provision is working for you and your child. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions.

If you have any immediate questions, please contact your child's Form Tutor who will be able to provide support in the first instance.

During the last lockdown our community pulled together to deliver an outstanding remote learning experience and we have every confidence this will happen again.

With best wishes



Chris Coleman



Hannah Seymour



Joanna-Hall Tomkin