



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this finds you safe and well.

Our approach to online teaching and learning from home is informed by feedback from our teachers, your sons, and by examining the latest research and writing surrounding online learning. Those of you who were parents with us last March will remember that we conducted whole-school pupil and parent surveys that helped us to evaluate what was (and was not) working for our boys. Whilst we have sought feedback from students about the online learning experience from day one, we are now increasingly using focus groups to deeply understand individual boy experience. Such an approach allows us to continue to quickly disseminate effective approaches for online teaching and learning among our teachers. Regular circulars to staff, online forums for posting and responding to queries, and internal TeachMeets (where teachers present ideas and best practice) allow us to ensure that every one of us has the opportunity to learn and to develop our approaches to teaching. Much has changed since our first experience of whole school learning from home and we are committed to continually improving our provision.

Your son will receive a blend of synchronous (Live, and on Teams) and asynchronous lessons across the week. In any individual subject the majority of lessons will be live and during asynchronous lessons teachers will be available to field queries within either Teams chat or by email. Whilst turning to these outlets should not be the default for boys when encountering a problem, we appreciate that support will be needed and should be used. The Education Endowment Fund published a review of the evidence surrounding remote learning. This highlights the importance of teaching quality as the driver behind pupil learning and does not position synchronous or asynchronous lessons as being more effective. Whilst the benefits of synchronous lessons are widely understood, asynchronous lessons have several advantages within the blend of pupil learning. One such advantage is that pupils can work through the material designed by their teacher at their own pace, ensuring that each boy is able to produce work that best demonstrates their ability, and of which they can be rightly proud. For example, in a lesson containing recorded input from their teacher, your sons can pause the lesson when asked to complete a task or revisit an explanation from a teacher should they need to. We have complete confidence in the judgement of our teachers to determine which approach will lead to the most effective learning in each instance, recognising that different pupils may have individual preferences.

We will also be asking pupils to have their **cameras** on as the default within lessons and to have them on during tutor periods in the mornings. We have been running trials with this during the week. Where all pupils have had cameras on in lessons, pupils have reported increased levels of engagement and a feeling of greater accountability. Some pupils who had previously felt a little exposed as an individual with their camera on felt more comfortable when they were one face among many. Teachers too have spoken not only of it furthering the joy of working with your sons, but of it allowing them to better 'read the room' and spot misconceptions. It has also helped in effectively judging the pace of lessons. Cameras will not always be on; just as we feel that having cameras on can reduce distraction in some cases (such as when pupils are verbally contributing to lessons) there are other times (such as when they are working for a section of the lesson on an individual response) when they may do the opposite.

The use of cameras provides further benefits to pupils and staff in terms of feeling connected. This move will also allow teachers to spot those occasions when your son may not be himself so that your boys receive the highest level of pastoral support, something we pride ourselves on. Updates from Teams now allow students to blur their backgrounds and we will be asking your sons to use that feature when their cameras are turned on.

We do recognise that there may be occasions when it may not be possible for pupils to have their cameras on. Where this is the case, we ask that parents let Tutors and Housemasters know so that teachers can be made aware.

In the Upper School, boys will continue to receive prep using Firefly, with teachers mindful of the diversity of tasks set in lessons and prep across a week. If your son is in the Fourth Form, Remove or Fifth Form, they should be aware of which day their prep should be completed for each of their subjects.

As ever, we welcome feedback from your sons on their experiences and they should feel comfortable discussing things that are working, and things that are not with their tutors. Should they wish to be part of a focus group, they can contact me directly. Full details on the remote learning arrangements for boys this half term can be found [here](#).

With all best wishes,

**Will Montgomery**

Assistant Head, Teaching and Learning