

Dear Parent / Carer,

Thank you so much for your patience and support during this first very difficult week of closure. As a school we remain committed to doing our best to provide work for your child to complete at home, as well as providing support and reassurance in these new and challenging circumstances.

I will be writing separately to Year 11 and Year 13 to update them on the situation regarding the award of GCSE and A level grades, and the grading of other qualifications.

This week has been a steep learning curve for us all as we attempt to get used to remote ways of working, when all of our provision is designed for face-to-face contact. Luckily, as a school we did already have some systems in place through Epraise, Office 365 and Teams which enable us to share work and communicate. However, the situation progressed so quickly over the last two weeks that we did not have sufficient time to ensure that all students and all staff were confident with all elements of the operation of these programmes.

We are acutely aware that we haven't always got everything right in these first few days. We know that some students have had difficulties accessing work; we also know that some students and parents have felt that the amount of work being provided is too much or too little. Please be assured that we are trying our very best to refine our ways of working, to act on the feedback we've received and to provide as much material as we can to support your children and their continuing education.

The principles for setting and completing work are evolving and include:

- Teachers trying to provide work for a class when they would normally be teaching those students. This is an attempt to keep some routine in place, and to avoid overwhelming students with too much work, all set at the same time.
- The work set is ideally to last around 20-30 minutes. Teachers are trying to put short deadlines on each piece of work so that students don't have lots they feel they should "catch up" with. If they miss that session, they miss it. That's fine.
- Students should do what they can. Parents can only do what they can – we do not expect parents to take on the role of a teacher. Enjoy spending some time together, try to balance school work and family time.

Please do understand that this is not 'home schooling'. Teachers are trying their best to provide meaningful tasks for students to do, but that this work is reinforcing previous learning and is in no way meant to replace a full taught curriculum.

Teachers also need your help and support at a time when they are also dealing with stress, illness and worry:

- Please limit any e-mails to teachers for help with work or other matters to what is absolutely essential.
- Please comply with teacher requests for communication within certain timeframes – in any case, please do not contact them outside of normal school hours except in an emergency.
- Please do not expect teachers to be able to comply with all requests. The average teacher is responsible for around 250 students. One e-mail from each of these students, assuming five minutes to deal with each one, would generate well over 20 hours of work!
- Teachers are approaching the end of a long and stressful term. The Easter break is needed by all – students, parents and teachers. I am therefore asking my staff to take a proper break and to pause in setting work.

Of course, in an emergency, the school is always here to support you and your family. Please do not hesitate to contact us in the case of an emergency. We will always do our best to help.

Finally, general communication and support will be posted on the school website in our 'Coronavirus update' blog. This can be accessed from the important notice pop-up on the home page. If you do not see this link please clear the cache in your browser, or search 'coronavirus' and select the update page.

Wishing you and all your loved ones the very best at this difficult time.  
With very best wishes from us all at Hanley Castle,

Lindsey Cooke  
Headteacher