

6th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year! I realise that this time last year, none of us envisaged a year like this or starting 2021 like this. We really hope that you all managed to get a rest at Christmas and were able to celebrate, albeit in ways that were different to what you had planned. As you know, we are all adapting to changes as they occur but we just wanted to give a short message about the next 8 days ahead and will put these as bullets just for clarity.

The online work set is not 'optional'; pupils are expected to complete it. The pupils need to see this as working from home rather than extra holiday. If you feel there is anything we need to be aware of, please contact your child's tutor. We do understand that circumstances at home can make this difficult and we want to work with you to best support your child's education.

Work will be set to cover the lessons pupils would have had, so it is best they follow a clear routine. Feedback from last time showed a clear correlation between established routines and good mental health.

There will be hangouts with form tutors during the week. This might be with those pupils who are in school. The tutor will send out invites for this using your child's school email address. We advise pupils to check their emails on a daily basis so that they are aware of what is going on and when.

There will be a weekly assembly throughout lockdown although the time for this might change. The assembly is a good way to keep a sense of community and belonging. Those children who are in school will access this with their teacher.

If there are reasons (such as illness, bereavements) that work cannot be completed, please contact the subject teacher if it is just related to that subject and the tutor if it is across the board who will let staff know. As always, please do contact your child's tutor in the first instance with any concern or query.

If you run into problems getting your child organised or getting work done, please do contact the tutor who may be able to offer a hangout to help organise and keep an eye on progress so your child knows their tutor is looking out for them and are there for them to offer support and guidance. **Please keep in mind that many staff will be in school teaching the key worker children full time** as well as managing online teaching and may not be able to respond to emails or check work as quickly.

Although not always easy, please do your best to ensure your child has a quiet space to work. Some parents brought in garden furniture and made work corners in their hall or lounge in the last lockdown which helped. Many parents found that having their children work in a public space

rather than their bedroom was more conducive to work.

We understand that it can be difficult to concentrate under these circumstances and we recommend breaking work into bite sized chunks. Regular breaks can help with concentration. Building time outside and ensuring daily exercise happens can make a big difference to children's wellbeing.

Feedback from parents from the last lockdown made it very clear **that pupils will find it difficult (impossible!) to work with distractions such as mobile phones, games, TV etc.** What seemed to be most effective is where these were used as a reward once work had been completed. Using social media, games and TV as an incentive was a key factor in creating motivation in some otherwise somewhat reluctant students! As parents, you are in charge of (and pay for) these devices and access so please do take charge of them or they will 'run the show'; this is our experience from last time.

Thank you in advance for your support with this; I know how hard it can be to support with schoolwork as well as working from home yourself.

Kind regards,

Karen Bowskill
Head of Year 5