

13 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Since the government announcement last week that schools should move to remote learning for most students, we have switched to our contingency school closure plan.

I am writing to set out what our remote learning provision is and to explain the rationale for our approach.

Government guidance

On 7 January, the Department for Education issued guidance for schools about provision during this period of national lockdown.

When teaching pupils remotely, the government expects schools to:

- *“set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects*
- *provide teaching that is equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. **This will include both recorded or live direct teaching and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently**, and will be as a minimum 5 hours a day for key stage 3 and 4 (please note that there is no minimum expectation for KS5 specified).*

Online lessons do not necessarily need to be recorded by teaching staff at the school: Oak National Academy lessons, for example, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content.”

Our offer

We have updated the information on our website ([here](#)) to provide a summary of our offer. We are providing remote teaching according to the timetable and curriculum students would have followed had they been in school. We are using a variety of delivery methods, including:

- **Live lessons** taught by your child's class teacher, recorded so that students can access this later if needed. The frequency of live lessons varies accordingly to age and the amount of curriculum time dedicated to each subject.
- **Tutorials** (e.g. to get help, receive feedback on work, or talk through work in smaller groups)
- **Recorded material** (either produced by the school or a high quality provider such as Oak national or the BBC).
- **Set work** which students are expected to complete independently.



Pitching remote teaching so that it keeps students engaged for the right amount of time is difficult. One student will take an hour to complete a task, which another may do in half the time, or another may take much longer to complete. What we can do is to provide teaching and work for each lesson which should take the average student an hour to complete.

Why do we value variety?

There is no ideal model for remote teaching, and even if there was, we would have no idea what it is! Whilst teachers have been teaching in classrooms for decades, we have very little knowledge about what effective remote teaching looks like. It is easy to assume that the 'best thing' is to try to replicate what happens in the classroom online. However, this isn't possible or even desirable.

The Education Endowment Foundation have pulled together the research on remote learning ([here](#)). They conclude that ***“the quality of remote teaching is more important than how lessons are delivered”***, and that 'blending' delivery methods is advisable.

On Monday of this week, Ofsted published a helpful guide to remote education ([here](#)). In the document they challenge the myths around remote education, including the belief that live lessons are the superior form of remote education:

“Some think that a live lesson is the ‘gold standard’ of remote education. This isn’t necessarily the case. Live lessons have a lot of advantages. They can make curriculum alignment easier, and can keep pupils’ attention, not least as the teacher has more control over the learning environment. But live lessons are not always more effective than asynchronous (not live) approaches.”

One of the myths propagated by the media and outspoken commentators (who have often never taught in a school) is that all-day live lessons is the ideal. Whilst this *may* suit some students, it is very unlikely that a constant diet of sitting in online lessons is healthy or productive. The evidence suggests that students tend to switch off, become distracted, and 'free ride' on the contributions of a few. It is superficially appealing as students are kept busy, but this does not necessarily mean they are learning. This is reflected in the student feedback from the first lockdown where older students asked to cap the number of live lessons. It is understandable: have you tried being in Zoom meetings for five hours each day?

It is also the case that what works for one student may not for another. Whilst some may engage well in online live lessons, others may benefit more from quiet study. **If schools rely too much on one delivery method, they risk disadvantaging certain students.**

It would seem that a sensible approach is to:

- **Provide a variety of delivery methods, which include direct teaching by teachers, multiple medias and recorded material, tutorials.**
- Move teachers and students gradually towards methods and technologies which are unfamiliar to them so that the quality of teaching does not suffer.
- Continually seek feedback and monitor provision, adjusting the 'blend' of methods to meet the specific needs of students in each subject, age group and class.

This is what we have set out to do.

Our challenge as parents

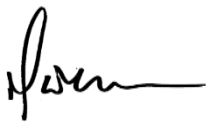
As you probably know, I have two teenage daughters. One loves school and is very self-motivated. The other is largely indifferent to school and would rather be doing something else. For each, a different blend of remote teaching methods would suit. I am at school almost all week, and my wife is a teacher and spends all day teaching and setting work for her students. Therefore, my girls get very little (if any) help from us during the school day.

As their father, I know one needs more structure and nudging than the other. However, I also appreciate that their school cannot tailor their remote teaching exactly to the needs of my children or to my circumstances as a parent. For the record, I think her teachers are doing an amazing job under very difficult circumstances.

I am sure you are facing your own versions of the same dilemma. I feel a sense of guilt that I cannot give them the attention they need during the day. I keep reminding myself that these are exceptional circumstances and we just need to do our best.

I hope that this letter explains the rationale for our approach clearly. We have the highest ambitions for the quality of what we are delivering into your homes and will continually work to improve our offer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Evans', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Evans
Headteacher