

Helping you to support your child's virtual school experience

During this time, we know how difficult it can be for parents as you try to balance the tasks of working from home, standard parenting and overseeing your child(ren)'s education. Below we provide responses to a number of FAQs that will hopefully provide you with the information you need to enable you to work in partnership with the school.

FAQs

When delivering live lessons should students have cameras and microphones on?

As you know, we deliver a mix of both live, synchronous and non-live, non-synchronous lessons as part of our offer. With live lessons we have found that it is much more conducive to teaching and learning when students have their cameras on and when they use their microphones to interact with our teachers. Whilst we understand that some students may not feel comfortable with their cameras on, or when providing answers over their microphones, we would encourage all students to engage using these mediums. To help ensure that students are able to fully engage please ensure that they have a working webcam and microphone and please encourage them to be brave and use them when in lessons.

How will the end of year assessment look this year?

As we are currently operating a virtual school experience we will be adapting our assessment approach for the end of this academic year.

In Key Stage 3 all departments have been asked to adapt their approach to ensure that they arrive at an end of year assessment grade without the need for formal examinations so as to reduce the potential impact on well being. This will vary by subject and will incorporate a range of approaches including, but not limited to, teacher observations, class work and assessments, homework and project work.

In Year 10, again departments have been asked to be mindful of the situation in which our students find themselves and adapt their process accordingly. As Y10 students are in the first year of a two year, externally examined course, departments may choose to complete more formalised assessments online, though these will be adapted given the situation. Depending on when we return to school, we will then look to provide students with a practice formal examination opportunity in Term 1 of Y11.

Will the A Level programme launch as promised in August?

Preparations are still in full flow and the A Level programme will launch as planned in August 2020. In recent weeks the A Level subject timetable has been put together and students will soon receive communication and confirmation (dependent on final (I)GCSE grades) regarding the subjects they have chosen to study at A Level. As previously mentioned, over

the coming weeks students will receive lessons from their subject teachers to help them prepare for A Level study and bridge the gap between Year 11 and Year 12. Over the coming months it will be very useful if those students returning for Year 12 could familiarise themselves with the 'FAQs, Expectations and Life as a BSY Sixth Former' section of the Sixth Form prospectus (page 19). In addition to this, students can use the subject codes within the prospectus to access subject specifications and begin to examine the content they will begin studying in Year 12. An online version of the Sixth Form prospectus can be found [here](#).

Will lessons continue for Y11 once predicted grades have been submitted to the exam boards?

Y11 students will finish their official study of IGCSE material next week. Following this we will be providing a post-16 preparation curriculum. This will include taster lessons in the subjects that students plan to study at post-16 level along with experiences relating to careers, university study and academic referencing. For this reason, it remains very important that students engage with the Virtual School Experience as much as possible.

How are you checking pupils' attendance?

Student attendance is being closely monitored by teachers and Heads of Key Stage. Attendance and engagement registers are completed throughout the school day; at the beginning of every synchronous lesson and during form time. Unexpected absences are then followed up by communicating directly with students and parents. For non-synchronous lessons, work is set by the teacher for students to complete during the lesson and in some cases, for homework. The completion of this work is used as an indicator that the student has attended class. Once again, the absence of completed work is followed up by teachers, and for sustained periods, by Heads of Key Stage.

What are you doing about children who are not engaging with lessons or virtual school?

Student engagement is monitored through participation in activities during all lessons. Teachers require students to complete activities or assignments, take part in discussions, answer questions and in some cases, share their screens to model work for others. This level of interaction means that engagement, to some degree, can be tracked. For those students who are failing to engage with lessons, subject teachers are contacting students directly, and where sustained periods of disengagement are displayed, Heads of Key Stage are communicating with both students and parents. The goal of these communications is to assess why students are not engaging and to offer assistance and support.

How do I know as a parent if my child is doing the right thing / doing too little / too much?

Make sure that you check the weekly lesson overview emailed out on a Sunday. Reach out to teachers and your child's form tutor if you have questions or concerns. Attend and contribute to the online parent forums to ensure that you are kept abreast of the latest information. And

finally, trust that teachers will reach out to you if your son/daughter presents a pattern of not meeting deadlines, failing to attend/engage with lessons or submitting inadequate work.

My child seems to have a lot of spare time... is this right?

We continue to run our timetable with lessons starting at 08:10MMT and finishing at 15:00MMT. Our offer includes a blend of synchronous and non-synchronous lessons, supplemented with competitions, ASCs, The STEAM Stream, homework and enrichment events - there should be more than enough, if students take care and invest the necessary effort, to keep students engaged for a significant portion of their week.

Where students do not engage with the opportunities we provide, there remains the possibility that they will appear to have a lot of spare time. Given the remote nature of a virtual school experience we are relying on parents to ensure that they support their child(ren) and the school with regards to engagement. We recommend that parents should check with their child(ren) what work they have been set and that they refer to the weekly overview shared with parents and students each Sunday. Showing an interest and helping your child(ren) build structure into their day will help ensure that they are occupied and engaged in the learning being set.

It is worth remembering that we are in unprecedented times and that students will inevitably struggle when working at home. It is therefore key that those at home with them provide support and encourage balance. As a school we can provide lesson ideas and other activities but it is the support at home that will make the real difference as the COVID-19 situation continues.

Who should I contact if I'm worried about my child's academic progress / emotional wellbeing?

In the first instance you should make contact with your child's form tutor. You should do this via email. Form tutors will be able to answer most queries and will discuss any concerns with subject teachers or Heads of Departments (academic issues), or Heads of Key Stage (pastoral / well-being issues). If concerns continue, or escalate over time, form tutors will pass your worries on to the Deputy Head of Secondary, the Head of Secondary, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school.

How can the school support more opportunities for social interactions? My child is missing her friends!

In a school environment there are some subjects that facilitate social interaction better than others and on many occasions students are required to work independently. However, as a school we are closely monitoring attendance to ensure students are attending all lessons, including the lessons that often actively promote social interaction and collaboration, for

example PE and drama. In addition to this, asking students to turn on their cameras and microphones will improve social interaction and allow students the opportunity to see their peers, hear their peers and feel connected. Away from curriculum lessons we are also facilitating social interaction in our tutor time periods and during our normal Wednesday afternoon assembly time. Following assembly students are asked to reflect as a form group and tutors are actively engaging open discussions. In fact, assembly last week encouraged students to consider a number of key questions with their peers by setting up their own virtual meets and enjoying social interaction, just as they would during break and lunch times at school. However, we would remind students to be kind and considerate and to treat online interactions with the same respect as they would face-to-face interaction.

How do I know what is essential as opposed to desirable for my son / daughter to complete; he has so much to do I don't know what is the priority.

This should be made clear by each individual teacher. In most cases, where a teacher has set a piece of work that is 'desirable' it is an extension task for students that have completed the 'essential' piece of work. If a student (or parent) is unclear whether a task needs to be completed, the deadline for completion, or where a task needs to be submitted; he/she should contact his/her teacher. The teacher will reply as soon as possible, normally within one working day, and provide further clarification.

What are the goals my child needs to achieve so as not to fall behind?

The main goal during this time away from school is for your children to find a balance that works for them and that allows them to engage with their school work whilst looking after their wellbeing. Trying to maintain contact with friends, engaging with family, taking part in physical activity and ensuring their week has structure, are all extremely important.

From an academic perspective, students in Years 7-9 students should do their best to attend lessons and meet project/homework deadlines but not worry if they miss the odd lesson or deadline. Clearly if a pattern develops then it is important that this is addressed. It is also important for parents and teachers to understand that student progress is likely to be slower whilst learning at distance, and that online learning, by its very nature, can create anxiety in students. In Key Stage 3 we have the flexibility to pick up and re-cover topics at different times - once school returns to normal, teachers will adapt their provision to try and close any gaps created by this unique situation.

Students in Year 10 are in a slightly different situation to those in Years 7-9 in that they are in the first year of a two year externally examined course. With this in mind, teachers will have to cover some new content in their online lessons. Students should do their best to engage with this learning and to meet project/homework deadlines. We plan to run more formal assessments for Y10 students in Term 1 of Y11 in order to provide them with formal

examination experience and to provide a stronger indicator of where they are currently performing.

Year 11 students have almost completed their Y11 IGCSE studies and should now be looking forward to post-16 education. From the week of the 25th May, we plan to implement introductory experiences for Y11 so that they can sample post-16 style curricula and learning.

What do I do if my child is gaming excessively or becoming distracted online?

We are happy to provide support and guidance here, but ultimately access to and monitoring of online time whilst at home is a family decision and responsibility. For example, if a child is gaming during the day rather than completing the work set and you are aware of this, then please feel free to address it and issue your own consequences if you feel it appropriate. If a pattern of incomplete work and/or deadlines is noted by teachers, then we will contact you, normally via email, to let you know so you can follow it up at home.

There are a variety of resources available that offer great tips for parents during COVID-19. Many of these go well beyond screen time and online behaviour. The sites below have a number of useful articles and tips:

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips#9>

<https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/rethinking-screen-time-time-covid-19>

https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Positive-Parenting-and-COVID-19_10-Tips.aspx

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

If you have any further questions, please contact the school and we will do our best to get back to you with a response.

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