

**Head Teacher Update**

**15th January 2021**

Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope that the first full week of remote learning has gone well in your home. Whilst none of us underestimate how challenging this is for parents, young people and teachers alike, I know that our school community is working hard and we are all pulling in the same direction.

No matter what our individual circumstances are, each one of us is coping with change and this is never easy. As I mentioned in a previous letter to parents, it has never been more important for us to look after each other. Communication is a big part of this, therefore during this lockdown I will be sending out regular HT updates.

**IT Access**

We sent out a survey to parents which closed on Tuesday 12th at 9am. We had just under 500 responses which is terrific. From this we were able to see which pupils needed help with password resets / hardware / stationary packs.

I have contacted the parents who required stationary packs and these have been collected from the high school/nearest primary school.

Mr Munro is in the process of contacting families that need support with IT/wifi access.

Mr McGivern has been resetting Glow passwords and Miss Wilson has led on supporting those with Satchel One (previously show my homework) issues.

We will do another survey in the weeks to come to make sure IT access continues to run as smoothly as possible. In the meantime, contact the office 0300 300 1331 if there is a problem.

**Keyworker provision**

The school remains open for the small number of pupils whose parents successfully applied to the council for a keyworker place. These pupils are working on their individual remote learning timetables in the same way that the pupils at home are.

Following the First Minister announcement about employers actively supporting more of their staff to work from home, if your circumstances change and you no longer require a place please let us know as soon as possible, thank you.

**Remote learning and monitoring engagement**

As I mentioned in my previous letter to parents, we are expecting pupils **as far as is possible and reasonable** to follow their normal timetable at home. We are keen to sustain and progress their learning. However, we are acutely aware that families need flexibility and that remote learning 8.50am – 3.40pm may not be possible, or indeed, desirable for many young people. Therefore, we have made the decision, in common with many Renfrewshire high schools, not to monitor period by period ‘attendance’ in remote lessons.

However, from Monday 15th January we will be monitoring the **engagement** of our young people. This means that we will be asking teachers to let middle and senior managers know of any pupils who show patterns of not signing into lessons, not completing tasks set, and pupils who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour in remote lessons. In the first instance, Principal Teachers of subject areas will contact parents if we are beginning to worry that a child is not engaging. In due course, PTs of Pastoral Support and Depute Head Teachers may also be in touch. This is to offer families as much support as possible to ensure there are no barriers (e.g. no IT provision) so that our pupils do not fall behind in their learning.

This week has been about setting up remote learning and settling the pupils into these new online platforms. Next week will focus on asking pupils their views on what is going well in relation to remote learning, and what we can improve upon. A survey will come out to pupils approx. 16th January to gauge their opinions on the remote learning offer across the curricular areas, and to ask them what styles of remote learning work best for them. We are keen to hear from our ‘customers’ what are the best ways to teach them on virtual platforms, and we will share this with the staff so we can tailor our methods accordingly.

Finally, a reminder that our remote learning materials are being housed on our school website. Top right hand corner, there is a tab for ‘remote learning’; here you will find a range of resources including our remote learning website and the MS team codes.

**SQA**

I understand that the current position brings additional anxiety to the young people in S4-6 and to their parents. We are in the relatively fortunate position of having completed two rounds of formal assessment (October assessment week and December assessments/prelims) and therefore have made a strong start to the generation of evidence that will be required for SQA’s alternative certification model. As soon as SQA make clear their plans we will communicate this to parents and pupils. In the meantime, a concentration on learning and teaching for our seniors is the best advice we can give – alongside robust engagement with online lessons.

**Keeping in touch**

I spoke with the chair of the parent council, Jean McFarlane, this week. I will be keeping in regular touch with Jean, who in turn is in regular contact with the rest of the parent council. Our next meeting is scheduled for February.

Pastoral staff are in very regular contact with many of their pupils and families who require and welcome this close relationship with the school.

Pupils can ‘check-in’ with their pastoral teachers through PSE lessons each week. This is in addition to the check-ins with subject teachers each day.

Most importantly, if you need us, please phone us on 0300 300 1331. This might be about remote learning, IT, needing stationary, discreet support for a family matter (e.g. financial hardship in these tough times), or you may be worried about your child’s mental health or wellbeing. Whatever it is, we are here to help. PT Pastoral will be your first point of contact; however, the office staff will always endeavor to get you through to the most appropriate person. There is also the school enquiries email.

johnstonehighenquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk

With best wishes to you and your family,



Lynne Hollywood

Head Teacher