



WILLIAM FARR

C of E Comprehensive School

11 January 2021

SVE/SXG

Dear Parent/Guardian

We have now completed our first week of remote education following the sudden announcement of school closure. Staff have worked incredibly hard to try and adapt the lessons they had planned for face-to-face teaching so that they can be suitably delivered online. The process of repurposing lessons, learning to use new technology and adapting to remote working has gone well. However, in light of our experience last week, moving forward we do want to make some changes to our processes to make improvements for the benefit of both students and staff.

There are many ways that students can access Teams lessons and we are going to encourage a single approach across the school to try and simplify the approach and promote greater consistency. We recommend use of the desktop version of Microsoft Teams where possible as this has more functionality. This version can be downloaded from the following web links:

Windows: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app>

Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/microsoft-teams/id1113153706>

Chromebook: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.microsoft.teams&hl=en_US&gl=US

We will continue to set a VLE task for each lesson, but students will be asked to access online lessons via their Teams calendar only. In addition, recordings of lessons will be accessed via Teams, rather than being uploaded into Microsoft Stream. A 'how to' document is attached to this letter to assist you with this. Students using the Teams App, who were unable to attend a live streaming session and who wish to view a recording of a lesson, will need to request this via the VLE.

We have changed the default settings for online lessons so that students will now request to join the lesson and are admitted to it by staff. Once the lesson is completed, all students should leave the lesson and there should be no further use of the group chat. Students should not attempt to re-join the lesson or try to communicate with other students through the group chat. The group chat should only be used in the online lesson and should only be for asking and answering questions relating to the lesson. Students should be aware that all group chat discussions are recorded by Teams.

We apologise for any delay in responding to requests for login details and new passwords. The school received an extraordinary number of these requests last week, along with requests for support with IT, and it has taken us some time to respond to them all. If you have a school IT-related issue, then please contact Mr Carlyle, IT technician, at: j.carlyle@williamfarr.lincs.sch.uk

We have high ambitions for our remote learning and we are aware of the need to make the amount of work set manageable for students. We are currently aiming to follow the full timetable for all year groups, although we are keeping this under review, particularly for Key Stage 3. We are also aware that students may not be able to complete the same amount of work in an hour lesson at home as they do in school. Staff have been



asked to factor this into their future planning and ensure that work, including any Teams contact, can be completed during the hour. Some additional tasks may be set to students in Year 11 and Year 13 where this is necessary.

We do not know when we will be given information about how grades will be awarded this summer, but it is important that students in Years 11 and 13 continue to work hard and engage with the lessons being set.

We are also very conscious of student and staff wellbeing and the time both may potentially spend in front of computer screens. We have encouraged staff to limit the length of Teams lessons for Key Stage 3 and 4, as well as set work for the remainder of these lessons that is often not computer-based where possible. Students in the Sixth Form have fewer lessons per day than the rest of the school and so are likely to have longer Teams lessons. We encourage all students to follow their normal timetable and this includes taking breaks and having a lunchtime. Homework is not being set to allow students to finish their studies at the end of the school day.

Towards the end of this week we will inform you of how we believe your child is engaging with our remote education. We will release engagement reports at stages during the closure. This first report should be treated with some caution as it will focus on the first week of remote learning and for some subjects, particularly those with one lesson per week, it may be too early to give a clear indication of engagement. In addition, there may be some gaps in the data due to staff unavailability.

We are also fully aware that IT issues may have caused some problems for students last week and that shared IT access may mean students cannot attend all Teams lessons. We are not making judgements about students based on this report. It is to provide parents with information and they should not be concerned if they are aware of any issues that it flags. For us, it is an opportunity to highlight how pleased we are with those students who are doing very well with the remote learning and make parents aware of any mismatch between their understanding of their child's engagement and ours. In the previous closure, we did have issues with students marking tasks as complete when they were not done or the work was not submitted.

If parents have concerns from the engagement report, they should first look at their child's VLE page. This will contain details of all of the tasks and online lessons that have been set for each subject since the closure. They can check which tasks have been completed, check whether work has been submitted and see if any comments have been sent by staff. Where students may have fallen behind, we are prepared for them to draw a line under the first week of lessons and aim to get themselves back on track from now. This should enable parents to resolve any issues without having to contact the school. Should you feel that you do need to contact us for advice, then please use the main school email: wfarr@williamfarr.lincs.sch.uk indicating to which member of staff your query would best be directed.

Finally we would like to thank parents for the many supportive comments we have had over our efforts to continue to educate our students through online learning. We also appreciate the pressures that it places on families and your support in making it work effectively. We will continue to review our online offer and may make future changes in order to best support our students' wellbeing and maintain their engagement with the remote learning.

Yours faithfully

Mr S Ellis
Deputy Headteacher