



Update Letter -2nd February 2021

Remote Learning update and feedback

Dear parents, carers and students



We are now in the fifth week of Lockdown and everyone is doing an amazing job managing this incredibly challenging situation. It's the same lockdown for everyone, however, everyone is different and we are all having a different experience. I know that every single person in our community – student, parent, carer, teacher, member of the support team, extended Holywell family - is doing the best they can. Please let me start off this update by saying ... doing your best is good enough. Please take care of yourselves and your family; health, safety and wellbeing must come first at all times.

Thank you to all those families who took part in our questionnaire on remote learning. We had over 180 replies and most families are pleased with our provision:

- "Overall the remote learning has been very good".
- "Big thank you to all of you for all you do!"
- "We appreciate all of your efforts in adapting so quickly and providing interesting and appropriate work. From us, the message to you all is simply a huge thank you and keep up the good work!"

There were some families who wanted less work, some who wanted more and there were some families who had a less positive impression: "This has not been a great experience". Overall, the main request was for more live lessons. There were lots of helpful suggestions and 'tweaks' to make remote learning more manageable and some of these suggestions have already been implemented.

From this week, we will do the following:

- 1) Where possible, we will publish the work for the week on Sunday/Monday.
- 2) We will list the end date as the date of the actual lesson (unless the work is for more than one lesson that week in which case the due date will be the last lesson in that subject in the week).
- 3) We will enable 'online submission' so students can submit work online.
- 4) We will be clear as to what we are expecting to be submitted.
- 5) We will have a separate listing for Zoom lessons and we will put the word 'Zoom' in the title (because sometimes Zoom lessons were getting 'lost').



Headteacher: Mr MG Simpson MA, NPQH

Deputy Headteacher: Mr S Van Der Merwe – Deputy Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead: Miss A Stewart

Assistant Headteacher: Mrs H Donnellan – Designated Safeguarding Lead / SENDCo: Mrs J Davies

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- 6) We will give at least 24 hours' notice of a Zoom lesson.
- 7) We will provide alternatives to Zoom lessons (eg., narrated powerpoints/videos) for students who cannot access these in real time or who are not comfortable with Zoom lessons.

There were some common issues or queries and we have used some of the comments to provide some answers, explanations, responses and ways forward:

It would be helpful for parents to have access to contacting teachers directly.

This is available – please contact the subject teacher using the messaging facility in Satchel One – just add a message into the 'Submit' section. It is helpful for us just to have one main means of communicating with staff. Alternatively, you can always contact a member of staff via the school office by phone or email (school@holywellschool.co.uk).

It would be very useful if all the work could be set either on a Friday or at the start of the week for the following week. This way we can organise the week better. Sometimes when lessons drop in towards the end of the week and are expected to be completed in the same week it gets quite stressful.

From this week, all work will be set on Sun/Mon and the 'due date' set will be the day of the actual lesson.

Extension work?

Additional work is always available – please ask.

The work set is fine, it's my child's lack of motivation and concentration that is difficult

We can help with that - please contact the student's tutor, Assistant Head of Year or KS Leader - a motivational phone-call and a regular 'check-in is often all that it takes to sort this out.

We feel they are getting a lot of work!

This time in Lockdown, the DfE have given us a very clear direction about the amount of work we have to set and that the work should tie in with their usual curriculum. We are doing this; however, we recognise that it might not be possible to complete all the work. We were alarmed at the number of students who were doing in excess of 5 hours per day – please stick to the lesson times and if work can't be completed in the time allocated, please don't do any more (unless students really want to and are happy to do so. Our main concern is that students (and parents) are safe, well and healthy. If it's too much, please just do as much as you can. If you need help and/or reassurance, contact the student's form tutor and we'll help all we can ... and don't worry!

Screen-free day – a possibility?

This is a definite possibility – we'll have a look at some of our 'theme days' and see what we can organise.

Most other schools are providing a full day of live lessons with a small amount of home learning/self-directed. This would be better for us as it would provide structure and opportunities to ask questions.

We acknowledge the benefit of live Zoom lessons and we are trying to provide as many of these as possible. It is always difficult to compare the provision of one school with another – each school has its own specific set of circumstances. Unlike some other local schools, we have a relatively large number of students in school as part of our Critical Worker provision. We have too many students in school to simply provide them with laptops so they get the same experience as the students at home (neither do we have the technology to support this). In-school teaching commitments for all staff also mean that a 5-lesson 'live' provision is not possible – hence the mix of different approaches – and this is also why some live lessons are having to take place outside of usual timetabled slots. We are also mindful that not every family has access to enough devices or spaces to allow every child to access 5 hours of Zoom lessons. In addition, many staff also have personal home-schooling commitments too; staff are working around their personal commitments and we are also supporting their home-needs where we can. Please note, there is no requirement for us to deliver a full day of live lessons and we do believe that a blended approach is the best way to provide a flexible provision for all our families. The latest DfE guidelines state:

The remote education that schools provide should be equivalent in length to the teaching your child would normally get in school. You should expect this to include a mixture of:

- recorded or live direct teaching time
- time for pupils to complete activities independently, such as working through assignments, PE or reading in a comfortable space

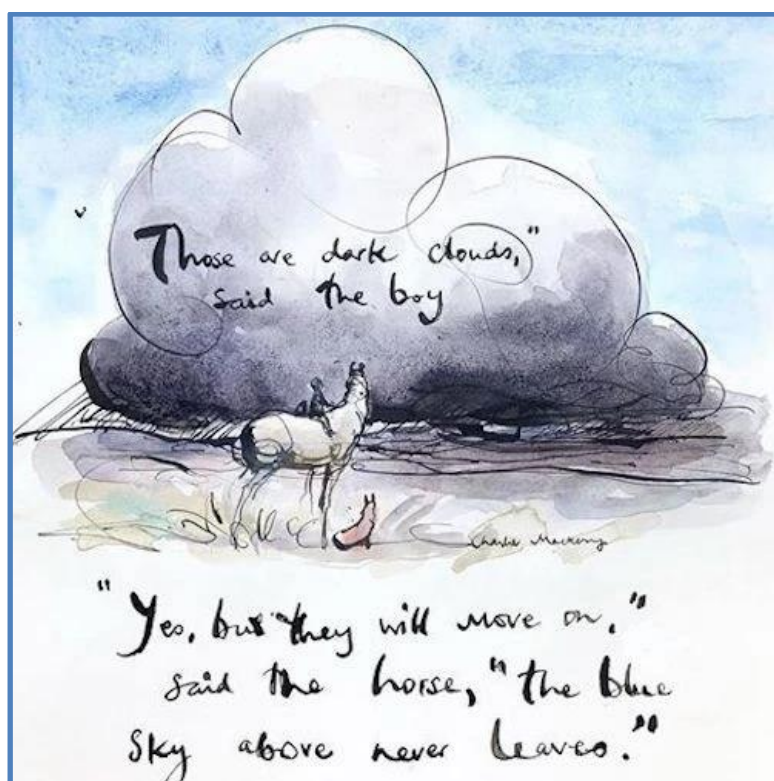
Full details of our Remote Learning Plan are in our Contingency Planning document on the school website.

Zoom meetings should be clearer in Satchel One... it would be nice they were due in the day of the meeting so they would come to the top of the list.

From this week, we will have separate entries for Zoom lessons and we will always include 'Zoom' in the lesson description.

Teachers are slow to respond to comments posted in discussion of show my homework and some of the work we have completed from the beginning of lockdown has still not been commented upon.

There *should* be feedback on work submitted. The amount of work submitted and the volume of correspondence from students is quite overwhelming for staff and we are doing our best to provide feedback and support for all students. Staff are working through comments methodically and, whilst we are trying to respond as soon as possible, if staff are teaching in school, this can mean that 'real-time' responses are now always possible. That being said, if there is a lack of feedback over an extended period of time, please let us know as this should not be the case. We will also be more explicit about what work should be submitted and we will ensure that 'online submission' is possible. For written assignments, we would be grateful if work was submitted as WORD or GoogleDocs documents rather than screenshots or photographs.



I hope that this is helpful and I hope that the adaptations we have made will help you to manage the work being set. We are genuinely trying our best to provide as much support for you as we can and we are certainly not intending to provide anything less than a good remote learning provision! Thank you for your continued support and hard work – we are all in this together. Please stay in touch, ask for help, and above all, stay safe and well.

Best wishes

Mr Simpson