



30th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

A number of you have been contacting the school with understandable concerns about how much work children are expected to do each day, what happens if they don't meet the deadlines that their teachers have set and what to do if they are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work they need to do.

The first thing to say is that there is no set way for students to work through the work that has been set whether in the form of a hard copy pack or on the school website. Although we have suggested that students work through their timetable for the day, spending some time on each subject, we know this is a learning curve for students, parents and teachers alike with each family needing to find the approach that works best for them, based on their circumstances and needs. The packs and the identical materials provided on the website should be seen as a guide for students and their parents and are designed to be linked to the work that students have already been doing. However, for the system to work, there will have to be a degree of flexibility for students in how they approach what has been provided by the school. We also recognise the barriers which can make it difficult for students and parents to provide the environment for their children to work at home. This could be related to computer access in the home or the availability of quiet spaces to work.

Therefore, for some students, it may be sensible to focus on particular subjects to begin with rather than attempting too much at once. Other subjects can be attempted as confidence grows. Teachers have been reminded about being flexible about deadlines and parents are always welcome to contact the school if their child is feeling overwhelmed or anxious about any aspect of their work. Our Directors of Learning will be overseeing the curriculum and ensuring it is manageable and accessible for all. At this difficult time, your children should not have the added anxiety of feeling they are not meeting expectations or that they will get into trouble for failing to meet a deadline. Instead, parents could encourage their children to have a personal goal in mind for each day and work towards achieving it. We want parents to know that we are aware of the constraints and challenges and that we are here to support you.

As the duration of home based learning is an unknown for now, parents should also feel that they have the autonomy to be flexible in how they organise their children's day. It is perfectly acceptable to interweave subject specific work with some of the online learning and activity that is being screened on national TV and websites such as those shared below. It will be essential to build in time for creative projects and outdoor pursuits (within the remit of the government's recent announcements) and allow children to learn new life skills. The key message for students is that as long as they are attempting to follow their timetable of subjects, in a way that works for them, that is sufficient. The day does not need to comprise six conventional lessons but can be broken down into alternative ways of learning such as those mentioned above. This is a perfect time for young people to catch up on their reading, learn about current affairs, do some gardening, learn to cook or learn an instrument. It is so important that students don't spend all day at the computer and have the opportunity to engage their brains in different ways and that don't involve devices. We need to trust that you and your children are doing the best you can under difficult circumstances.

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Further guidance on how students can manage their workload will be issued as time goes on and as we all settle into the new way of working. As a guide, going forward, we will be asking for students to aim for 2-3 hours per week in English, Maths and Science and 1-2 hours per week in their other subjects. This should hopefully be manageable for all. Also, their tasks will be broken down week by week much more from now on. Based on parent feedback, we will be setting very little work over Easter and the Easter tasks will be optional projects.

I know that the parent body will understand that we are only at the beginning of this complex process and finding our way. It will take time to review and modify our practices so that we can improve them as time goes on. The school would simply ask parents and carers to continue to work with us and tell us when things aren't working, so we can fix them. We have very much appreciated you telling us when you think we are getting it right.

Wishing you and your families good health in the coming weeks.



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