

# Parent/Guardian Information

## Academic Advice - Start of Term

### September 2020



**This information is intended to inform parents/guardians of our plans for remote learning, should the need arise.**

#### **What will lessons look like in school?**

With the exception of a very small minority unable to start school next week, we look forward to welcoming our pupils back to school on Tuesday. Although health and safety guidelines will have an impact on many areas of school life, we are keen to return to normal lessons immediately. Pupils need to get back into the habit of working alongside others and developing their skills and understanding in a school environment.

#### **What if my child cannot attend school?**

If a child tests positive for Covid-19 and feels unwell then, of course, they must focus on returning to full health. However, we know that some children can test positively while displaying mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. We also recognise that pupils may need to self-isolate because they have been in close contact with someone else who has tested positive. Others are unable to return to school as they need to quarantine after being abroad while others live in countries where the borders are currently closed.

In these instances it is vitally important that pupils' education is not interrupted. When thinking about remote learning we have decided that it must be both meaningful and motivating for pupils. Wherever possible, it should mirror what is going on in school and give pupils the opportunity to develop the same skills and understanding. All subjects should be included using a timetable similar to the one used in school.

At the same time, this period of remote learning will be very different from last term where pupils and teachers alike worked from home. We learned a huge amount during the extraordinary circumstances of last term. However, juggling the needs of pupils in school while supporting pupils working remotely will be a new challenge and one which must remain manageable for our staff. We will continue to explore the best way to do this, recognising that what works best for one subject or year group might not work best for another, and our provision is likely to change and improve as time goes on. Please bear with us.

#### **What will remote learning look like?**

Remote learning will take place through Google Classroom. For the benefit of families new to Dean Close who may be unfamiliar with the platform, Google Classroom is a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and assessing work. The primary purpose of Google Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students.

Detailed information on how to use Google Classroom will be sent to parents/guardians when their children need to access remote learning. We will also send out a lesson timetable.

#### **What will my child need?**

During lockdown, many families will already have what they need for children to learn remotely. If not, children will need access to a digital device connected to the internet, such as a laptop or desktop computer.

For the purposes of accessing work that we are setting in Google Classroom and completing assigned tasks, a Chromebook is ideal. It comes ready to use the Google platform and its web-based software such as Docs, Slides and Sheets. They tend to be a more affordable option too.

Bear in mind, if you go for a Chromebook, you may not be able to install certain software. For example, if you know that your child is a keen photographer and you would like to install Adobe Photoshop, then a Chromebook might not be the best option for you and a more powerful laptop might be your preferred option.

Please remember: there is no expectation that you should go and buy some technology. If a laptop or Chromebook is not an available option, pupils can access Google Classroom through a mobile phone (borrowed from a parent/guardian perhaps) or a touchscreen tablet. The pupil may not be able to complete all digital tasks using this option but they should be able to read the task and also leave comments/ask questions on the classroom wall. We will aim to offer a mix of digital and non-digital tasks for pupils in this situation and for those who need a screen break.

### **How will my child interact with their teachers?**

We recognise that live interaction between pupils and their teachers is an important part of the learning process. Therefore, we are putting together a programme of clinics which all pupils learning remotely will have access to. This will enable their teacher to address any misconceptions or introduce new concepts. The timing of these clinics will be sent to any pupils needing to access remote learning.

Pastoral care is at the heart of our school. Class teachers in the Junior Forms and Tutors in Years 6, 7 and 8 play a key role in this. Therefore, pupils learning remotely will have at least one video call a week with their class teacher/tutor. This could be 1:1 or set up to enable them to take part in normal tutor time with the rest of their class or tutor group.

### **How long will each lesson be?**

At school lessons are fifty minutes in length. Home learning is more compact and so lessons are designed to take 30-50 minutes. Your child may appear to fly through the work and teachers will monitor that the quality and quantity are of the expected standard. On the other hand, your child may struggle to complete their work in this amount of time, particularly initially as they readjust to working from home. If so, please reassure them that it is ok to hand in work that is unfinished, rather than end up with the work piling up.

### **What about feedback?**

Feedback is a crucial part of the education process. In school we are constantly giving pupils feedback - letting them know what they have done well and what they can do to improve further. We see feedback as a necessary part of the remote learning programme. It will help keep pupils motivated and enthusiastic about their learning and ensure that they can continue to make good academic progress in these extraordinary times.

Feedback can take various forms. It might include typed comments added to pupils' work in Google Classroom, auto-feedback through online quizzes and audio feedback following key pieces of work.

If you have any specific concerns or questions arising from this information sheet, please contact DCPS Academic Director, Mr J Gould ( [jgould@deanclose.org.uk](mailto:jgould@deanclose.org.uk) )