



15 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are now at the end of our first fortnight of remote learning in Term 3. Whilst none of us would choose to be in this position there is much to celebrate about how the students and staff, and indeed you as parents and carers, have responded to the circumstances. Within this letter I will set out information and updates by topic, so please feel able to skip to the parts that are relevant to you.

### Update on Exams 2021

At the time of writing the anticipated consultation from Ofqual has yet to be released. On Wednesday, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson outlined his expectation for how exams will be replaced this year. In a letter to exams regulator Ofqual, he said that grades should be issued *“as late as possible in the academic year to maximise remaining teaching time”* and that any teacher assessments should be informed by ‘breadth of evidence’. He has also asked the exams regulator to explore the *“possibility of providing externally set tasks or papers, in order that teachers can draw on this resource to support their assessments of students”*. It has been suggested there will be no algorithm this year and that there will also be a clear appeals process.

Once the consultation is released we will evaluate our response to it and advise you of any submission to the process we will be making. We will particularly be checking that the arrangements also apply to Year 10 and Year 12 students seeking qualifications this year.

In the light of the suggestions above it becomes even more important that all year groups remain focused and engaged in their remote learning for the duration of this academic year. Our staff are experts in their subject and, given planning time, will be able to navigate a path towards whatever form of assessment is required. Students can be assured that if they keep doing what they are doing and maintain their focus on what they are asked to do by their teachers, then they will be well prepared for whatever lies ahead.



Distinguished School

## Remote Learning

It is a really good indicator that, according to our tracking, c.90% of all work set has been completed. This is not just attendance in lessons, this is completion of work to the required standard. When you consider some students will be unwell or may have had technical problems to overcome in this first fortnight this is a great sign of students' commitment and engagement. It remains the case that for the very few who are not able to engage fully at home there is a place at College where they can be supported.

I am particularly grateful to our teaching staff. Over the last few weeks, they have taken all their planning and resources and at very short notice moved it all on-line with phenomenal success. They have shown themselves to be agile, adaptable and inordinately creative in the way they have supported students and each other. Instead of being potentially de-skilled by teaching remotely they have seized the opportunity to learn, collaborate and innovate. It has not been easy and I am very grateful to them and to the students who have engaged so positively.

This week Ofsted released a summary of *What's working well in remote education* to share across the profession the best of what they have seen in their remote visits to schools. The key findings were affirming and reassuring in their reflection of practice at Heathfield; the delivery of our well-planned curriculum, simple uncomplicated methods of teaching that keep the focus on the learning and a variety of inputs that suit the needs of the lesson and the subject. A variety of experiences both on and off screen will help to keep students engaged and healthy with the same balance they might experience at College. As we have seen this is exactly what students are experiencing and they are doing a brilliant job in what we understand are difficult circumstances.

We are very grateful to students equally, for their adaptability and also for their adherence to the [Protocols for Microsoft Teams](#) lessons. This will enable our staff to keep offering the variety of input, explanation or feedback that will be so useful in the coming weeks.

## Tutor time and assemblies

You may be aware that Tutors are also reaching out to connect with their tutees. As far as possible tutors will run one Microsoft Teams session with their tutor group per week and set the content for the usual Tutor time package. There will also be virtual assemblies following the normal curriculum. These will all be available from Firefly. We will also signpost the content on Twitter @Heathfield\_CC for those who like to follow along. The topic for next week is Well-Being and this will be accompanied by a package for parents as well as the input that students will be used to.

## Parent Well Being

Next week sees the first release of our parent well-being package focusing on the power of nature. This correlates with the information provided to students who will receive an assembly and tutor time materials on the topic. During the week the parent page on Firefly will be updated with materials and resources: <https://heathfieldcc.fireflycloud.net/parents-1>. We would love to know how you get on with the ideas, so please email or tweet us to let us know.

## Positive Covid Cases

I need to inform you that as well as normal seasonal illness, we also have additional positive Covid cases this week that affect our staff and student population. In the last week we have experienced four additional staff and four student positive cases. We do not believe there are close contacts in any cases which affect the students either in school currently or remotely. We continue to apply the safety precautions on site to protect us all: distancing, sanitising and cleaning, face coverings and ventilation.

For staff who are currently unwell and therefore unavailable, we have ensured there are alternative methods for picking up issues raised by parents or students and this should be indicated by the out-of-office replies on their email or phone. Please contact us at Reception or via [office@heathfieldcc.co.uk](mailto:office@heathfieldcc.co.uk) if you feel you are struggling to get through. It might mean we have reduced capacity to respond as swiftly as we would like in some cases, please be patient with us.

## If my child develops Covid symptoms

I have attached to this letter a reminder guide of the advice if your son/daughter does experience symptoms.

I must also ask that if your son/daughter does develop symptoms or receive a positive test result that you inform us as soon as you are able, even if they are working from home. For example, it will allow us to communicate with staff and manage expectations around work completion.

## Thank you

I would also like to thank all parents who have shown incredible support for all staff, teaching and support staff at this time. We really appreciate it. We are adapting fast to ever changing circumstances and when parents understand and recognise that it makes a huge difference. I would particularly like to thank those parents who have shown patience and empathy in their communications with staff even when things are difficult. The support, humour and collegiate approaches have given confidence and assurance to many.

At all times the priority for staff is to provide the very best for your son/daughter; it won't be perfect all the time and we are open to the fact that sometimes things go wrong. Knowing that we work in a warm and supportive community means staff are encouraged even when they too, like all of us, have those '*less-good*' days!

Having such a positive environment means we have been able to achieve all that we have so far; I am hugely grateful to the wider community for helping to create this and sustain it as we go forward.

Yours sincerely



**MS C BARLOW**  
Headteacher

