



**Friday 8th January 2021**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the first fortnightly parent update of 2021. Today, you will find information on: engagement in remote learning during the first week; top tips for remote learning; a reminder about our LIFE bulletin; the support we have in place for students with learning difficulties and / or mental health concerns; sixth form applications for students joining our college in September 2021 from the Head of Sixth Form; Y11 and Y13 examinations; and an update on our mass testing preparations. It's been a busy week!

### Engagement in Remote Learning

We've had a fantastic start to remote learning through our live lessons, so far peaking at 95% of students having attended their lessons on Thursday morning and an average of around 87% attendance to all lessons across the week. 99% of students have accessed at least some remote learning this week, with almost half not missing a single lesson. We will continue to monitor the attendance of students at our lessons and will contact you where your child is not engaging. If you are having any technical issues please email [itsupport@stokesleyschool.org](mailto:itsupport@stokesleyschool.org), or if you have any difficulties with equipment or internet access please contact us via your child's head of year/sixth form or Mr McGreal, Assistant Headteacher, on [r.mcgreal@stokesleyschool.org](mailto:r.mcgreal@stokesleyschool.org). We can provide a chromebook if your son / daughter does not have a device to work on and / or a 4G dongle providing pre-paid internet access if you do not have your own. We will also shortly be able to provide a pre-paid data SIM from Vodafone that can be used in your mobile phone to access the internet or tether a device to. We can also request an increase in your data allowance from your mobile phone company if you are using that to access the internet. In short, we can help!

### Top Tips for Remote Learning

The more we are teaching lessons remotely, the more we are learning about what works best for both ourselves and our students. We've been sharing advice amongst ourselves as teachers, but have some 'Top Tips' for students, too, in terms of getting the best out of their Google Meet lessons. We have been so incredibly impressed with their engagement, enthusiasm and adaptability and want to find as many ways as we can to make their day run as smoothly as possible. Here's how you can help too, and no doubt already are.

1. Support them to get into a routine in the same way that they would if they were at school. Setting an alarm so that they're up, making sure they have had a good breakfast and are dressed appropriately by the time tutor time begins at 08:50am is a good way to kick start the day.





2. Make sure they're sitting somewhere comfortable. If they can be at a table or a desk, they'll find that they feel far better by the end of the day than if they're sitting on a bed or sofa.
3. Encourage them to separate home and work. We know this is difficult when they're doing everything in the same place, but working somewhere that isn't their main place of relaxation will help them to separate the two.
4. Encourage them to take proper breaks and, where possible, to get outside for some of their day. Try to encourage break times that don't involve looking at a screen. Our timetable has three breaks built in - one in the morning and one in the afternoon, both lasting 20 minutes, and one lasting 30 minutes around lunchtime. We ensure students coming into school leave their chromebooks behind and get out into the fresh air at these times. (In fact, today, we have been out in the snow!)
5. Make sure they've got a bottle of water with them when they're working. Keeping hydrated is key to keeping the brain functioning, especially when it's having to focus on the same thing for such a long time.
6. Make sure they've got their timetable for the day easily accessible and, where possible, have their lessons loaded at the beginning of the day so that they're ready to go when each lesson starts.
7. Remind them to click the 'turn in' button when they've completed their work, so that the teacher can see their progress and their efforts can be rewarded.

Finally, we have a request as their teachers which comes because we miss the sound of childrens' voices and conversations in school. We know that it can be daunting for them to 'unmute' in remote lessons and make verbal contributions, but each and every one that we get makes us smile. Interaction is so important in the classroom (and one of our favourite bits of the job!), so please - when you're talking to your children about their lessons - encourage them to speak up and contribute - both for us, and for themselves. Some think their mics don't work, but making sure they click 'allow' rather than 'dismiss' when joining the online lesson and are prompted about the microphone and camera usually solves this problem.

### Bulletin

You may remember that during the last lockdown we shared a weekly bulletin with you full of ideas and suggestions to keep your sons and daughters busy and engaged at home. The positive parent and student feedback that we got from this bulletin has meant that it's become part of the fabric of our school week, with a LIFE bulletin published for students to read every Monday morning. We plan to keep this bulletin going during this current national lockdown, and have added a box of 'lockdown links' at the end if you're looking for ideas. A copy of next week's bulletin is attached along with this letter for you to peruse, and in the coming weeks you can find it on the 'News' section of our website.





## Support for students with SEN and/or mental health concerns

The SEN team continue to work hard to support those children with additional learning needs, whether they are at home or attending on site, using our best endeavours to maintain a service as close as possible to our normal provision. Additional adult support is available in the online lessons where it would have been available in the classroom: this means that we can support children in their online lessons through additional explanations and by collaborating on shared documents. The students who are attending on the school site also have access to teaching assistants to support them with their work.

Our Ethos team staff are continuing to support students' social, emotional and mental health needs via regular contact with the students they work with. Any student who feels that they need additional support in this area can contact their form tutor or use the 'I'm worried' button on the student dashboard to alert a member of the team.

We remain available for support and advice: if you would like to contact us regarding support for learning or emotional and mental health, please use the [sen@stokesleyschool.org](mailto:sen@stokesleyschool.org) email address and a member of the team will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

## Sixth form applications - message from Mr Weedy

It is clear that many of you read these letters, as I received a flurry of sixth form applications after my reminder just before the Christmas holidays!

I am still receiving a steady stream of applications, but I know that some of you will be waiting to hear for confirmation regarding whether we are running sociology and politics; a few students have recently asked me about health and social care too. On Tuesday of next week, each Y11 tutor group will be sent a Google Form to help identify interest in each of these areas and more. I can then collate the information immediately and send out the findings in the near future, so it is vitally important everyone fills in this form next week.

Year 11 parents' evening next week is a brilliant opportunity for you and your son / daughter to ask teachers their opinions on the subjects he / she could study at A Level. One of the biggest strengths of joining your school's sixth form is that your teachers know your capabilities without you needing to sit an exam. If yo-ur teachers think you are capable, that might take away some of the anxieties you may have surrounding the news about the summer exams.

If you still haven't applied, visit [explorestokesleysixth.org](http://explorestokesleysixth.org) to find the application form and send it to [sixthform@stokesleyschool.org](mailto:sixthform@stokesleyschool.org). Feel free to email that same address if you have any questions as many of you already have.

## Y11 and Y13 Examinations

Earlier this week it was announced that GCSE and A Level examinations for this summer are cancelled. At present, we do not have specific details regarding how we will be expected





to collate either our centre assessed grade or ranking for each student. Vocational subject examinations are not currently cancelled but we are still awaiting further information on this. A consultation is due to begin next week between the teaching profession, the DfE and OFQUAL. Following the conclusion of this, Mrs Darbyshire will write to parents/carers and students in Y11 and Y13 to explain how the process will work. We anticipate that the robust system we designed last year will only need minor adjustments, if any, to use again this year. Please be assured that, as we have gone through this process once already, we will be fully prepared as we move forward. Our advice to students in Y11 and Y13 is to keep working hard, to engage with their online learning and be prepared for future assessments and mock exams when we return to school.

### Mass Testing

We are still working hard to prepare the school for mass testing of staff and students using Lateral Flow Devices as this is a requirement of the DfE. A shipment of 4000 tests arrived at school on Monday along with boxes and boxes of PPE. So far, we have allocated a space on our school site and set it up for testing; completed a range of NHS training modules, and identified support staff we can temporarily redeploy to the test site in the early stages of its setup. Our catering manager and catering assistants have turned into testing and registration assistants, our lab technicians have turned into test processors, and our admin team members and some of our teachers (who are volunteering on their day off) have become results recorders! We have also had an overwhelming number of volunteers from the community and we are exceptionally grateful for this. Once all of our students return, we will have to scale up the testing operation and restore our support staff to their day job so, at that point, we will need all the help we can get.

Please be assured that if you are apprehensive about Lateral Flow Testing for your child, consent is required and does not have to be given. More information will follow in due course.

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I hope you have a pleasant weekend, and please keep in touch as we really value your feedback on our remote learning. In the next parent letter, I will be providing feedback to you following the parent survey that was conducted by our Trust before Christmas - thank you to everyone who took part.

Yours faithfully

Mrs H. L. Millett  
Headteacher

