

7 January 2021



Dear Parent/Guardian

We fully understand how difficult it is to keep students motivated and focused on their work at home, particularly when many of you will also be working at the same time either at home or elsewhere. Many of the staff here are also parents and trying to deal with the same problems as you – and even though we are teachers, trying to teach your own children is, indeed, a very different experience! So, I am writing today to try to offer some help and advice – some of which may be helpful, some of which may not – but I will try my best.

We have developed a 'Frequently Asked Questions about Home Learning' document, which is now available here:

<https://sandwichtech.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/document/Home-Learning-FAQs.pdf?t=1610025295?ts=1610025295>

We hope this is useful – and please let us know if there is anything else that you think we should include there.

Links to all the lessons that the students should be doing can be found here:

<https://www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk/629/covid-19-home-learning>

When you click on the relevant year group link, 'Block 1' has all the lessons for this week and next. After that the students should go to 'Block 2', which will be the next two weeks' worth of lessons and will appear in good time.

Yesterday and today I have written an email to all of the students explaining what we would like them to do and offering our support. Please encourage them to read this. It is important that the main emphasis for working is on the students – at school we try hard to foster a sense of personal responsibility and a good work ethic into the students from day one. It is them who should be doing the work, not you. If, for example, your son or daughter doesn't understand the work that they are doing, please do not feel obliged to try and work it out yourself and teach them - instead, encourage them to email their teacher directly and move on to some other work while they are waiting for an answer. I know it is easy for a student to say things like "I don't understand and so I can't do it" or "The teacher hasn't taught us that before" or "I haven't seen what the teacher is talking about before", which, when taken at face value can be quite annoying and stressful for you as parents, but sometimes this might not be accurate or true and the people who are best placed to deal with such comments are the teachers, who, through a gentle reminder or prompt, can often get the students concerned going again relatively easily. So please encourage the students to contact us. We are ready, willing and waiting to help.

In my letter to the students I encouraged them all, for each two-week block of lessons, to print out or copy out their timetable (which can be found in their log book or on Edulink) and tick off each lesson as they have watched the associated video. That is then something you could ask to see each day to check that they are on top of things. I have also asked them to check their school email each day, read the emails and respond to their teachers. Again, this is something you could help with by asking them about it on a daily basis – perhaps every now and then when you have time you could also ask them to show you. During the previous lockdown and during the recent year group closures, the Form Tutors of all students emailed them every week to check they were OK. The teachers reported that, unfortunately, there were a number of students who did not reply. If you could help with this we would be very grateful – we want to encourage a supportive, two-way dialogue so that we know they are well and are able to access the work and lessons we are setting them.

Deal Road, Sandwich  
Kent CT13 0FA

Telephone: 01304 610000  
Fax: 01304 610100

Email: [admin@sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk](mailto:admin@sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk)  
[www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk](http://www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk)

**HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD**

Sandwich Technology School is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales  
Registered number: 07401373 Registered office: Deal Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0FA

Approaching home learning by establishing a routine is perhaps the easiest way. If at all possible, creating a space where your child can work and establishing the times during the day when they will work will help. If your child is working in an area where other people are present, it may be a good idea to invest in a pair of earphones, so that they can listen to the lesson and not be distracted, and, similarly, they will not disturb others. It may also be a good idea to get a big folder that is sub-divided into your child's different subjects where they can keep the work they are doing for each lesson. Or, if preferred, this can be done just as easily with one cardboard envelope-style folder for each subject – what ever you have to hand or can get hold of easily. These do not need to be fancy or expensive; on Amazon, for example, you can buy a pack of 10 envelope folders for £3.49:

[www.amazon.co.uk/indigo®-Foolscap-Document-Capacity-Assorted/dp/B07VXJTFDC/ref=sr\\_1\\_21?dchild=1&keywords=cardboard+envelope+folders&qid=1610013201&sr=8-21](http://www.amazon.co.uk/indigo®-Foolscap-Document-Capacity-Assorted/dp/B07VXJTFDC/ref=sr_1_21?dchild=1&keywords=cardboard+envelope+folders&qid=1610013201&sr=8-21)

When the students sit down to do their lessons, it is important that they have everything they need in front of them before they start:

- their pencil case;
- paper;
- calculator;
- any relevant resources that they might need;
- the folder with the work from their previous lesson.

I know that some of the students may find sitting in front of a computer and doing six lessons straight a bit daunting. I know I would! Please remind them that at school, in between each 50-minute lesson, they would normally have an opportunity to stretch their legs as they would walk from one lesson to the next, as well as a 20-minute break in the morning and at lunchtime. So please ensure they are not putting pressure on themselves to sit and do the lessons all in one sitting back-to-back. Similarly, I know that some students are getting through the lessons and work quite quickly. I think that this is inevitable, because even though we are providing the equivalent of 6 x 50-minute lessons each day, this will not compare to the length of a whole school day because it does not include tutor time, breaks, etc. When you take out time spent settling down for each lesson, packing away and having the odd chat here and there with their friends, it is quite likely that they get through the work quicker than normal. It does not mean the work being set is inadequate or less than we would normally set. I am not saying that we are doing everything perfectly of course – if you do have specific concerns about any of the lessons, please do let us know.

If the students have done all their work and would like more, please do encourage them to use [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) which is an excellent resource covering all subjects for Years 7 to 11. For Years 11 and 13 we have also bought an extra online package that students can use to support their exam studies – we will contact you and them about this directly soon. All GCSE and A Level students can also access past papers with which to practise. If they need help finding these, please ask them to email their teachers.

During this time, it is also important that the students are able to speak (via electronic means) with friends and to get regular exercise as their wellbeing is important. A daily walk or bike ride could really help to keep them healthy. We will also produce a weekly assembly and send some wellbeing activities/quizzes via the students' form tutors to help with this, but, if you feel that your child is struggling, please do get in touch and we will try to help.

Finally, I wrote to you all, back on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December about various things including why we have chosen to do pre-recorded lessons instead of live lessons. If you wish to be reminded of this letter, it can be found here: <https://sandwichtech.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/lettershome/letter-covid-20-12-08-FAQs.pdf?t=1607429827>

In this letter I said that we were going to work on how to improve the feedback we are giving. We have already built feedback into the lessons – for example, if we ask the students to answer some questions during a lesson, we will often then give the answers so the students can see how they have done. However, we want

to do even better than this. We have, as a staff and in common with all teachers, had to learn and develop new skills fast in how to deliver consistent, easy to follow and good quality lessons remotely – this has not been easy whilst trying also to continue to provide education to students in school, but we have been working hard. So far this academic year we have been setting remote learning in two week blocks only, because students have mostly only been required to be at home for two weeks at a time. Our feedback policy states that we aim to give formal feedback once every 10 lessons. For the lessons that are most frequent (English and Maths), this is every two weeks – for all other lessons the interval is longer than this. Now that we are in lockdown again, it is clear that students will be learning remotely for longer than two weeks at a time, so we obviously need to find a way of giving consistent and good quality feedback to the students. Although this is already happening in some areas, we need to be sure we are doing it across all lessons. So from the next block of lessons (week beginning 18<sup>th</sup> of January) we will be doing two extra things:

1. We will regularly use Google forms (or Kerboodle) to ask the students to complete and submit some questions associated with the lessons. This will enable:
  - a. the teachers to see which students have engaged with the lessons – and who has not;
  - b. the teachers to see how well the students have done in answering those key questions;
  - c. the students to get instant feedback on how they have done with those questions.
2. We will ensure that every 10 lessons students will be required to submit work for marking, which will result in written feedback to the students, in keeping with our policy. If the students do not do this, the feedback will take the form of an email sent to them and copied to you informing you both of their lack of engagement.

Delaying this modified approach until the 18<sup>th</sup> of January gives us time to ensure that all teachers are trained on how to use the appropriate technologies to make this work. We hope this will improve the education we are currently offering even further and make sure we are consistently doing all that we can, in all subjects, to support the students through the next six weeks.

To conclude and summarise, to help you to support your children to work from home we would encourage you to:

1. check daily that your child has looked at their school email and responded to any they have been sent;
2. check that your child is doing their lessons and ticking them off on their timetable as they complete them;
3. provide an area, if possible, where your child always completes their work;
4. ensure that they have all the equipment they need;
5. encourage them to follow a daily routine;
6. encourage them to contact their teachers directly with any concerns that they have - we are happy to help;
7. encourage them to maintain regular contact with friends and get regular exercise to help with their wellbeing;
8. remember that it is important not to let home learning become too much of a source of stress for either you or them – we can all only do our best!

I am sorry this is so long, but I hope you find it useful.

Yours faithfully



Tracey Savage  
Headteacher