

28 January 2021



Dear Parents/Guardians

I am sure you will be aware of the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday that schools will not open before the 8th of March. This means that the students have at least another four weeks of working from home in front of them.

Throughout this period, we will continue to:

- provide a video lesson for every lesson on your child's timetable
<https://www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk/629/covid-19-home-learning>
- provide weekly video assemblies and other pastoral/wellbeing activities
- be available to you and your child for support via email and telephone (we will staff Reception throughout the lockdown)
- ensure that your child's Form Tutor contacts your child weekly via email
- contact you directly on a weekly basis
- continue to provide safeguarding support if you need it
- continue to provide vouchers directly to those who normally receive free school meals
- send you weekly reports that show you your child's level of engagement with their subjects for the previous week
- keep you updated about any changes as and when it is necessary.

In addition to this, for more vulnerable students and for those whose parents are critical workers which means that they cannot safely be at home, we will continue to provide in-school provision. For further information on this, please refer to the letter sent by Lucy Wanstall on the 4th of January, which is available on the 'Letters Home' page of our website:

<https://www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk/54/letters-home-1>.

We are also currently devising a plan to provide further weekly support to targeted SEN students. We will be in touch soon with people affected directly.

This week, for the first time, we have sent out a 'Weekly Engagement Report' for every student. Thank you very much indeed for the feedback we have had on this – the vast majority of which has been very positive. However, there are some points that have been raised that I thought might be helpful to explore in more detail here for everyone.

Firstly, as I have said before, we really do understand how enormously difficult home schooling is. These weekly reports are not about judging – it is about us trying to make it easier for you. Many parents have told us that they find it difficult to know whether their children are doing what they are meant to do. By sending one of these reports to you every week, we are trying, in a very simple way, to take that burden from you by letting you know the status quo. In the letter that went with the report, I explained that we understand that some students are doing the work – but not sending it in. Whilst this is, of course, OK, it does mean that the students are not benefitting from the feedback that teachers are giving and we really would like them to send in the work that their teachers request please.

Some parents were confused because they know that their students have sent work in – this may very well be true, but please remember that the report sent this week was only covering last week, i.e. Monday the 18th to Friday the 22nd of January, so it could be that the work you have seen being sent in fell outside of that period.

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Finally, I want to reassure parents that we do not expect you to know, or take responsibility for, every lesson or piece of work the students are doing. Some parents have asked how they are to know what their children should be sending in and when. The truth is, you do not, and nor would it be reasonable of us to put this expectation on you. The students, however, should know. The students will be on track if they:

- a) check their email daily and respond to emails as they should;
- b) watch their lessons and do everything that they are told to in the lessons;
- c) email their teachers directly to get help if anything confuses them.

Some parents have asked how they know whether they should email in the work or not, or whether it should be done on Kerboodle, Google Forms, etc. I can see how that may all seem complicated to the parents who, quite rightly, have not got the time to watch the lessons – **but the students should know**. In the lessons, the teachers state clearly what work should be done and self-marked, what work should be emailed in, when the students should do a Google Form, and when they should do the work on an online platform (like Kerboodle or Mymaths). In essence, the teachers do not need to see all of the work, only the pieces of work asked for in the lessons should be emailed to them.

Also, some parents have asked how the students can email the work in if they don't have a scanner – we are more than happy to accept work that has been photographed with a phone and sent in that way.

Many, many students are getting this right, so we know it works. Generally, we are pleased with the level of engagement that the register has shown and feel confident, through the constructive conversations we have had with parents over the last two days, that this will get even better.

On the 7th of January I wrote to you to try and offer some advice on supporting your child with their home learning. In summary, I gave this advice:

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 would now like to add a ninth point – which, as I said earlier, is designed to help you check that they are doing what they should be doing in a simple way:

9. check the weekly engagement report when it is sent to you, share the report with your child and praise/encourage improvements as is appropriate.

This really isn't easy for any of us – but together we are making progress.

Yours faithfully



Tracey Savage
Headteacher