

THE ROYAL SCHOOL ARMAGH

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REMOTE LEARNING AT RSA

“FOR THE INCREASE OF LEARNING AND GOOD MANNERS”

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THE ROYAL SCHOOL

ARMAGH (FOUNDED BY ROYAL CHARTER 1608)



Head Teacher:

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Remote Learning at RSA

The phrase remote learning has a number of interpretations and our understanding and expectations of it have developed significantly since March 2020. I am grateful to our parents, teachers and pupils for their ongoing feedback about how remote learning works for them.

Originally designed as a teaching tool to supplement the physical classroom, Google Classroom has now become the main medium for teaching in many post primary schools. Feedback from the first lockdown indicated that most pupils felt Google Classroom had worked well for them.

It is important to realise that the use of remote learning will, in most ways, be inferior to the experience of physically being in class. The momentary interactions, the ability to ask for things to be repeated or expanded upon, or just the ability of pupils and teacher to 'spark off' against each other and to be together in an atmosphere of learning, cannot readily be replicated away from the classroom. That said, we also discovered during the first lock down that Google Classroom was an excellent medium for some pupils who were shy or reluctant to engage in class for whatever reason.

It must be acknowledged that remote learning is considerably more time consuming from a teacher's perspective than physical teaching. None of the core elements are withdrawn, for example, preparation, marking and giving feedback, but a whole range of additional elements are added - printing, writing out what would normally be said, added problems of marking, network connection issues and the numerous daily challenges of working from home with which so many people are now familiar.

In the first lock down we worked hard to learn how to use Google Classroom and other media. Last term we worked hard to cover as much material as possible while also providing resources to the pupils who were isolating. This term we are committed to ensuring we have the resources to deliver effective remote learning across a range of media.

General principles

A good deal of research was undertaken last year which indicated that some pupils had issues with (amongst other things):

- Organising their time;
- Accessing devices;
- Getting peace to work as parents and siblings were all together;
- The quality of their Internet connection.

It is vital therefore than we do not rely exclusively on any one medium as we go into this term's teaching.

Visual & Live (Video & Zoom) Lessons

We will endeavour to increase our use of these and other similar media. This cannot be a uniform approach and it should not be assumed that it can facilitate the type of interaction which there would be in a physical classroom. They are not an effective way for pupils to have social contact with one another and we would recommend that parents facilitate their children in organised social contact with their friends.

These visual lessons work best:

- With smaller groups;
- To facilitate teacher explanation;
- To enable a visual demonstration;
- When all participants engage appropriately.

The use of these lessons will adopt a range of formats, some whole class teaching, some opportunities for smaller groups to meet with teachers and some recorded lessons which will be delivered by one teacher in a department to enable a whole year group to access a visual lesson. These visual lessons will not necessarily be 35 minutes in length and it is anticipated that there will be a number of them across the week. For a range of practical reasons experienced by pupils it is not in the best interests of pupils to simply timetable live lessons when a pupil would normally have a particular class however we have produced a timetable to identify the available slots and avoid clashes.

Pastoral contact


As you know pastoral care is always important for us as a school community. Our pastoral team remains active and contact can be made with any member of the team via the school. This term we will facilitate regular face to face pastoral time through Form Class and we will use appropriate technology to facilitate assemblies etc.

Conduct

The dynamic of an on line lesson is very different to a lesson in a classroom. We are today publishing our expectations of all stakeholders involved in online learning.

We are all working in a very new situation and I realise that we each face new pressures and challenges. We want to assure you that your school is here to help in whatever way we can and if you have any comments or questions please do not hesitate to contact us at school either by phone or email.

Yours sincerely,



Graham GW Montgomery

Headmaster