



5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will know, last night the government announced a national lockdown until mid-February. Whilst I know this is a hugely challenging time for everyone, we hope as a school we can try to keep the education of your child as normal as possible, albeit online for the majority.

First GCSE - Summer Examinations (Year 10)

You will have heard last night from the Prime Minister that examinations will not go ahead as planned for the Summer of 2021. This will potentially impact on Year 10 students taking their 'First GCSE'. After deciding to take a GCSE early, which I know would have been carefully thought through by yourselves, the school and your child, I know this news will have caused a significant amount of disappointment and frustration. It is likely that we will be asked to gather evidence of the quality of the work your child produces if we are asked to assign Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs), as was the requirement last year. Therefore, it is important for your child to maintain a high level of work during the remote learning period in lockdown. As yet, we have not received any guidance from OFQUAL and the DFE. When we know more, we will be in contact again to clarify the situation.

Year 10 Parents' Evening

This is scheduled for the Monday 18 January. This will go ahead as planned and you will be able to book appointments, as normal, via the Parents' Evening Booking System. The appointments will be via a video call function in the booking system. A letter will be sent to you on Monday 11 January with all the details to book appointments.

Remote Learning

All your child's lessons will be on Microsoft Teams. Please follow this link if your child is unsure how to access it: [teams-guide.pdf \(castleschool.co.uk\)](https://www.castleschool.co.uk/teams-guide.pdf)

Please ensure you and your child are clear on the following arrangements:

- We aim to maintain the integrity and breadth of the curriculum as much as possible.
- All resources and lessons will take place via Microsoft Teams.
- Your child should follow their normal timetable, timings as follows:
 - 8.45-9.10 Registration – each House will have a tutor group 'call' once a week
 - 9.10-10.10 Period 1
 - 10.10-10.40 Period 2
 - 10.40-11.00 Break
 - 11.00-11.30 Period 2
 - 11.30-12.30 Period 3

- 12.30-1.00 Lunch
- 1.00-2.00 Period 4
- 2.00-3.00 Period 5

- Most lessons will be a 'live stream' with their teacher, combined with some individual tasks.
- Some lessons and subjects may not lend themselves to streaming but alternative learning tasks will be in place.
- We understand your child may not be able to log in all the time, due to sharing technology. All 'live streams' will be recorded, so your child can view later, if necessary.
- Teachers have already emailed your child if they need to pick up work, for example Art folders etc.
- Teachers will try to limit the number of attachments your child is expected to use, as well as the need to print lots of work.
- The teaching staff and the pastoral team will be monitoring your child's engagement in remote learning and contact you if we have any concerns. Equally, please do contact the school if you have any concerns. Please be mindful that not all colleagues will be in school every day but we will endeavour to return your calls as soon as possible.

Remote Pastoral Support – Tutors/HOH

- Tutor time will be once a week and your tutor will send your child an invite for this via Microsoft Teams, this could include general well-being checks, advising on access to remote learning or specific work via our PALM+ programme.
- Heads of House will work with their team of tutors on a communication plan to keep in touch with specific individuals.
- There will be a House assembly once a week, again Heads of House will arrange this themselves with their Houses and send an invite via Microsoft Teams.

I am sure many of you will know that when working from home, it is very easy to be sat at a computer for long periods of time. Please do encourage your child to take regular breaks, when available, as well as exercise frequently.

Vulnerable Students and Children of Critical Workers

We continue to welcome vulnerable students and children of critical workers and, although I would prefer all students in school, it is a joy to see some present as I believe a school loses its vibrancy when it's empty. It's what makes The Castle School such a special place to work. The expectation is that students in school will follow their normal timetable and engage in live lessons along with students at home. They will need to wear headphones for these lessons and unfortunately Bluetooth headphones do not work on our computer system. We will provide sanitised headphones if required.

We will continue to expect children to come into school in their uniform during this lockdown period.

I feel for every student who has been working hard and preparing for the summer examinations, only to be told they may not go ahead as planned last night. Please do be patient and we will communicate more when we receive further guidance.

Thank you for your continued support, I have thoroughly enjoyed my first two days in school. Please send my best wishes to your child and, of course, I wish you and your family well during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely



Mr Lamb
Headteacher
The Castle School

Helplines and websites:

Additional remote learning resources:

The Oak National Academy can be accessed here: <https://www.thenational.academy>

BBC Bitesize can be accessed here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Support for parents of secondary age students online: <https://parentinfo.org/article/video-chatting-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-ofsecondary-school-age-children>

Pastoral support and help:

Out of hours and emergency numbers are also on the website front page -keep scrolling down. <https://www.castleschool.co.uk>.

Or on the help and support page on the website

<https://www.castleschool.co.uk/students/help-and-support.htm>

Help can also be found here:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications>

<http://www.sharesomerset.co.uk>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/worried-about-your-teenager/>