

VJJ/KMC

January 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

As I write this, the government has just announced that schools will not reopen after half term and it will now be Monday 8 March, at the earliest, before we can reopen. The final decision will be made in the week beginning Monday 22 February, which is the week after half term. Until we get further details we do not know if this will mean all students will be able to return to school on Monday 8 March. My feeling is that we are likely to see a phased return with the students in exam year groups returning to school first. I will keep you updated when we get further details.

This is obviously very disappointing for us all and I would like to reassure you that we will continue to do our best to provide your children with high quality remote learning and the support that they need during this difficult time.

This does mean that remote learning will be continuing for a few weeks for all our students. I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for all your hard work in helping your children to learn at home. I know that this can be challenging at times and I wanted to recognise the part you have played in keeping education going. Thank you for your positive comments and encouragement and also for your suggestions on how to improve things. This has been a steep learning curve for everyone and we are learning all the time.

I know that some of our students are finding things hard: they feel isolated and overwhelmed by the current lockdown. Please can you let them know that we are very impressed with their engagement in learning and we are here to help them if they need it. If you have concerns about your child, please get in touch so we can try and help.

Remote Learning Update – Moving Forwards

We have been inundated with emails from parents thanking us for our efforts with remote learning. This has really helped us as a school to feel proud and keep moving forwards in how we educate our students over the coming weeks. We have also had some suggestions for improvements, and we would like to let you know a few changes we have made based on the feedback we have received.

- **Live Lessons** – We have asked teachers to ensure that in Firefly if the lesson is live the title will contain the term “Live Lesson”. Teachers will also try where possible to put these lessons onto Firefly the day before the lesson is due to take place.
- **Length of Lessons** – We have asked teachers to ensure that they finish their lesson 5 minutes early and that they start their lessons 5 minutes later. This will allow students a 10 minute break in between lessons, which will allow for a break and a rest from the screen.
- **Assessment and Feedback** - When in school students do not have every piece of work marked. This would be impossible. Feedback can take many forms and may not always mean extensive written comments. For example, whole-class feedback or quizzes marked automatically via Firefly are also valid and effective methods, amongst many others. Teachers will ensure Assessment for Learning is used during all live lessons, checking marking will be completed as per departmental policy and students will have Key Assessment Tasks set as per school policy where they will receive a grade and detailed feedback.

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- **Concerns about engagement** – we are letting parents know if we have concerns about students not completing their work. We do understand that families are under pressure and that circumstances at home may make it difficult for students to complete their learning. We are contacting you so that you are aware of any concerns and can then address them with your child if you feel it is appropriate.

Top Tips For Students Learning From Home

There's no doubt that the last few weeks have been difficult and with a lot of uncertainty for the coming weeks it's important we maintain a level of structure in our lives and continue to work towards our goals. We've pulled together some tips and tricks for continuing to learn from home, you may not be in school, but keeping up with your education will help you in the long run.

Be Planned and Prepared

Plan your day beforehand, either at the end of the previous day or first thing in the morning. Make sure you know what the plans are for the day ahead including which lessons you have and if any of these lessons are LIVE. Gather everything you need to help you with your learning such as pens, pencils, paper, books, specific subject equipment.

Routine Routine Routine

Create a routine. Set an alarm, get up, have breakfast and get dressed at the same time each day. Decide on your start and finish times and stick to these hours.

Create Your Study Space

It's important to have a space where you can focus. Try and make your study space somewhere separate to where you relax and if you find that one place doesn't work, try somewhere different. It might be difficult to find a quiet place with all family members at home, but try and find a quiet space where you're not likely to be disturbed. Ask other people to respect your space during your working hours.

Stick to a Schedule

Maintaining a level of structure is important and creating a timetable for your learning will help you plan out your day. It can help you feel productive, organised, and sane! Follow your timetable. The structure of the school day is as follows:

Lesson 1 – 9.00am – 10.00am
Lesson 2 – 10.00am – 11.00am
Break 11.00am-11.20am
Lesson 3 – 11.20am - 12.20pm
Lunch – 12.20pm – 1.05pm
Lesson 4 – 1.05pm – 2.10pm
Lesson 5 – 2.10pm – 3.10pm

Take Regular Breaks

Get out if you can but remember to follow social distancing rules. Leave the house and get some fresh air at least once a day. Also, if you're feeling frustrated and don't think you are getting anywhere with your learning, the worst thing is to do is to panic, which we know is easier said than done. Take a break, reset and unwind – things often seem better after a break.

Stay Connected

Make contact with your friends and teachers/tutor daily. Talk to other students about what they are doing. Phone a friend/family member, and have a real conversation with people rather than relying on email or messaging.

Take Good Care of Yourself

Here are a few ideas to look after your health and there are a few simple things you can do to help you stay fit and strong:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Eat properly.
- Drink water regularly throughout the day.
- Don't spend too long sitting down, get up and move around at least once an hour.
- Don't spend too long staring at the screen use the 20-20-20 rule. The rule is that after 20 minutes' screen time you should look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This allows your eye muscles to relax and stops some of the strain.
- Use your online time wisely - You will be accessing your learning online and it is important to do the work set by your teachers, therefore it is wise to limit the time you spend on other digital activities.

Look After Your Mental Health

If you are feeling anxious, lonely or worried when working at home, there are some things you can do that will help:

- Try doing a different activity for a while. Sometimes going for a walk, drawing, reading a book or a magazine or listening to a podcast can help to calm a busy mind.
- Try something new:
 - If you've never baked before, try it.
 - If you've always wanted to learn a new language, there are apps such as Duolingo which are free.
 - Practice your writing skills by writing a daily journal or writing a short story.
 - If you like to draw and be creative, make the most of what you've got at home to create something.
 - Have younger siblings? Help them with their learning out in the garden or doing something creative, you never know, they might teach you something too!
 - Have a look at our Just For Fun section on Firefly and try some of the fun activities.
- Try a simple breathing exercise, such as breathe in for a count of three and out for a count of 5 (do this a few times).
- Talk to someone, this could be someone at home or one of your friends. You can also call the school on 01228 710044 and ask to speak to someone from our Student Services team 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday.

Bonus Tip!

As a bonus tip, we'd also suggest limiting your news intake. There's a lot of negativity on the news and whilst it's important to understand what's going on during this time, you don't need to hear about it every hour. This also means limiting your scrolling time, so much of the news you consume comes from social media and sometimes it's best to switch it all off... and...relax.

Basic Equipment

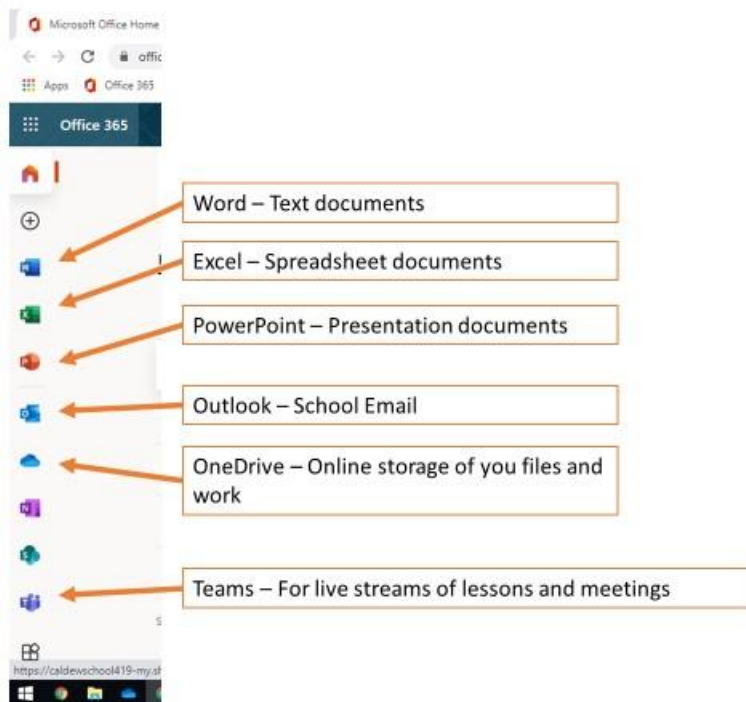
If your child is running short of basic equipment such as exercise books, paper and pens, there is a box outside main reception between 8.30am and 3.30pm, from Monday to Friday. You can collect the basic equipment from here if you need it. If you cannot get to school to do this and are finding that your child is running out of the equipment they need, please let us know by emailing office@caldew.cumbria.sch and we will do our best to help.

Access to Word, PowerPoint, Excel

We have become aware that some students are having difficulties completing their work as they do not have access to Word and other Microsoft Office software. All students can access Office software, including Word through their Microsoft account attached to their email. All of the instructions for this are on the school website at:

<https://www.caldew.cumbria.sch.uk/students/Remote-Learning/>

When students log in to their school emails they can take advantage of Microsoft Office. All students have access to the programmes. Once they log in through the school website this is what they will see.



If they click on the links it will open the programmes for them. When saving documents, it will save them to their “One Drive”. This means they can save all of their documents to one place and know they are safe.

Digital Devices

We have done our best to address device access and connectivity for those students where we are aware of issues. So far we have loaned out 88 devices to our students. However, we know that for some families, poor broadband connections and a lack of 4G signal means that connectivity is never going to be great, especially when multiple people in a household are on the internet.

If you are relying on your mobile device’s data allowance for remote learning, do not have fixed broadband at home and are struggling with the cost of additional data, there is a government scheme that could possibly provide support. Please email office@caldew.cumbria.sch.uk for more information about participating networks and eligibility criteria and include your mobile network in the message. Please note that some of the support is limited and on a first-come-first-served basis.

Red Box

As a school we provide free sanitary products in school as part of the Period Poverty campaign. We are making these available for students. There will be a box outside main reception between 8.30am and 3.30pm, from Monday to Friday. If you cannot get to school to do this please let us know by emailing office@caldew.cumbria.sch and we will do our best to help.

Year 9 Futures – The Start of Options and Information

We are planning to hold the Year 9 Options Information and Parents' Evening on Thursday 24 February, as planned. This event will happen virtually and you will have the opportunity to find out information about the options process, the various courses that your child can study next year and talk to subject teachers. Students will need to complete their option form and return it to school by Thursday 4 March. We will be writing to Year 9 parents with full details of the Year 9 Options process.

Year 11 - Sixth Form Open Evening

This event took place virtually earlier this term. I hope that students and parents found this useful. The deadline for options forms to be returned to school is Friday 5 February. If any students need any advice and guidance about their plans for next year, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Eastburn by emailing Cheryl.EastBurn@caldew.cumbria.sch.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vicki Jackson
Headteacher