

Dear parents and carers,

As discussed in our communication earlier this week, we are rolling out interactive sessions, which include live sessions in senior and middle school mentoring for students in Years 7-11, beginning next week.

We will be evaluating and reviewing these sessions throughout the week, with the aim to build this element into a wider selection of subjects in the near future. If your son/daughter is to be involved in these initial sessions, they will be contacted by their mentor via Show My Homework, inviting them to their Microsoft Teams meeting, over the next few days.

We will be using the online platform 'Microsoft 365' to which all students have access. The Microsoft 365 software enables all students to access and download free apps such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Excel, which can also be downloaded and used on a mobile phone. We would strongly encourage your child to make use of this provision, if they are able to, as it offers a wealth of useful tools.

Using this platform, mentors will be offering Teams meetings in which students can meet with their peers and their mentor to discuss their learning and ask any questions they may have, from Show My Homework tasks, to time management or well-being. Students, however, will not be penalised if they are unable to attend the sessions at the times allocated. Content delivered by members of staff during these sessions will be recorded, with links sent to the group, to enable those who wish to listen again, or catch up later, to do so.

Guidance on how to access and use Microsoft Teams is attached. This software can also be downloaded on to a phone or tablet if there is no computer available. If you have any technical questions regarding accessing this software or the functions within it, please contact Mr Sampson on msampson@canterbury.kent.sch.uk and he will be able to provide you with technical support.

You will also find attached the '**Online Learning Guidelines**' outlining what staff will expect in terms of your conduct whilst using Microsoft Teams. Please, read this guidance over the weekend in anticipation of your interactive sessions starting next week.

To reassure those who prefer the independence of the current model, it is important to note that our 'live' online elements will be in addition to, and not in replacement of, our existing packages. We are conscious of the need to acknowledge the range of circumstances of our families and the avoidance of a 'one size fits all' approach and hope that you and your children can appreciate the flexibility we are trying to offer with our blended approach to remote learning. We continue to develop our approach and will write to you next week with information about additional elements that will be added in the coming days and weeks.

We have heard, from a number of students and parents, that they are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content provided by teaching staff for each lesson. If this is the case for your child, please encourage them to submit whatever they are able to complete within the specified lesson time, rather than continuing with a piece for hours until it is totally finished. By submitting the work after an hour (or two in the case of double lessons) the staff will be able to gauge more easily whether the amount of content was realistic and will adjust it for future tasks.

Furthermore, in response to parental and student feedback, we have decided to suspend the setting of additional homework tasks at this time. Subjects will offer additional 'Challenge Tasks' and 'Love of Learning' activities, set as Flexible Tasks, which students can complete to develop their wider skills, but these will act as an optional extension. Similarly, if you and your child feel the work set is not sufficient, please do contact us so that we can resolve this issue.

We would also encourage all our students to build well-being breaks into their day, ensuring that they step away from their work at regular intervals. It is so important that we focus as much on our mental and physical well-being as our academic well-being during this difficult time, so would encourage you and your child to spend time outdoors daily, if at all possible. We completely understand how incredibly difficult the logistics of the current situation are for families, particularly those who are continuing to work full-time and juggle the needs of a number of children. Do please contact your child's Support Manager to discuss additional support that we can provide.

Please remember that your son/daughter is still able to communicate directly with their mentor via Satchel One, via email and through Microsoft Teams should they have any questions or queries. If your child does not have regular access to a computer or device, please make sure that their Head of Learning is aware so we are able to look at how we can support with this. If you have any questions about your child's remote learning, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Head of Learning in the first instance:

Mr Palmer, Senior Head of Learning - Middle School: rpalmer@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Miss Taylor, Head of Learning - Year 7: rtaylor@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Mrs Cox, Head of Learning - Year 8: rcox@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Mr Bonney, Head of Learning - Year 9: jbonney@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Mrs Bonneywell, Senior Head of Learning - Senior School: nbonneywell@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Mr Rattigan, Head of Learning - Year 10: drattigan@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Miss Phillips, Head of Learning - Year 11: lphillips@canterbury.kent.sch.uk

Yours faithfully,

Angela Banbery
Head of Middle School

James Brooke
Head of Senior School