



# Merchant Taylors' School

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# Remote Learning Policy MTGS

## Remote Learning Policy

Author: Headmistress

Last Amended: January 2021

Review: January 2022

## **MTGS Remote Learning Policy**

### **Rationale**

In the event of a school closure, the school is committed to providing continuity of education to its pupils and will do so through a process of remote (online) learning. Extensive remote learning would apply particularly in a situation in which the school is closed for an extended period of time, but a high proportion of pupils and teachers are healthy, and able to work as normal from home. This policy does not normally apply in the event of short-term school closures (e.g. as a result of inclement weather) or a short-term pupil absence.

Remote learning may also be appropriate in situations when pupils, in agreement with the school, have a period of absence but are able to work at home, at least to some extent. This may apply in cases such as exclusion from school, or longer term illness, assuming pupils are able to complete school work at home. Another relevant instance would be if, following an infectious disease outbreak, pupils are self-isolating at home but are not suffering with relevant symptoms. There is no obligation for the school to provide continuity of education to pupils who absent themselves from school, with or without parental permission, in contravention to school or government guidance. This may apply, for example, if parents choose to take pupils on holiday during term time. Similarly, this would apply if parents made the decision, without prior agreement with the school, to absent their daughters from school 'as a precaution', against official guidance, in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease.

This policy is under review and may be revised as necessary in light of further experience of remote learning and the circumstances around its necessity. For example, the extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning, owing to widespread illness, for example.

### **Remote learning for individual pupils**

Assuming an absence has been agreed with the school, and the pupil in question is healthy enough to work from home, the school will provide work for pupils who are unable to attend in person. If this occurs for an individual pupil, the collation of work and communication with the parent will be coordinated by the pupil's Head of Section and form tutor. The pupil's subject teachers will use a specially set up firefly page to make work available to the pupil. If there are any issues with the compilation of work, form tutors should liaise with the relevant Head of Section or Head of Department. Though every case will have its own specifics, a rough guideline for the frequency of communication between school and parent would be once per week. Work will only be provided to pupils in this way if there is an agreed absence lasting more than three working days. If a significant number of pupils are absent from school, but the school remains open, the Headmistress will decide whether the method of remote learning operated will take the form outlined here, or as outlined below.

### **Remote learning in the event of extended school closure**

In the event of an extended school closure, the school will provide continuity of education in the following ways:

- Registration takes place using an agreed format at 8:40am each day
- Weekly form time sessions will take place
- Regular assemblies will be delivered remotely

- Pastoral oversight of individual pupils will continue
- Regular direct instruction from teachers, with the ability of pupils to ask questions online (via firefly or Skype for Business or other cloud-based systems)
- The setting of work that pupils complete, written responses (if relevant) completed electronically
- The assessment of specific assignments that are submitted to teachers electronically and on which feedback is provided (pupils and teachers are expected to have access to the internet whilst at home; the school recognises that many families may not have home printers and will therefore not require the printing of material)
- Those students who require SEND provision will continue to receive this in line with their IEPs
- Vulnerable children will be assessed individually to ensure that they are still able to access the full remote learning provision

The primary platforms the school will use to deliver continuity of education are: firefly and Skype and/or Teams. Access to these platforms is via a pupil's normal school login; if pupils have difficulty with logging in, they should contact the school's ICT support. The extent to which different methods of instruction are employed is likely to be determined by the length of any school closure and the ability of both pupils and teachers to participate in remote learning.

For shorter closures, for example, teachers may set work on firefly for submission in person once the school has reopened. For longer closures, teachers would make more use of live sessions (see specific guidance below and appendix) and electronic assessment. The school reserves the right to vary the range of methods used to provide remote learning tasks, feedback and interaction, based on the particular circumstances of any closure and based on our experience. Tasks will be set in accordance with existing schemes of work, and tasks will be designed to allow pupils to progress through schemes of work at the same pace as if they were in school, where possible. Naturally, remote learning will require pupils and teachers to take a different approach to working through content, but tasks should ensure the pace of content coverage is as close as possible to in-school teaching and that pupils do not fall behind.

The nature of tasks set should allow pupils to learn independently, without the specific support of an adult at home. Unless there is a good reason not to, tasks will be set for individual classes. The type of task set will vary between subjects, but examples of appropriate tasks might include:

- Reading and noting new material from a common subject area textbook or electronic resource
- Working through subject-specific presentations or worksheets provided by the subject area
- Watching a relevant video resource and making notes on it
- Completing a listening exercise (e.g. in languages)
- Written responses to prompt questions, essay plans, etc.
- Completion of practice questions or past papers, particularly for those in examination years
- Working through relevant exercises offered by external providers (e.g. HegartyMaths, GCSEpod).

Teachers will set tasks through the tasks function on firefly and it is the responsibility of teachers and pupils to ensure they know how to use this functionality effectively (instructions are made available separately).

## **Live sessions**

Academic subject areas may also arrange for teachers to deliver content in a 'live' manner. There is an expectation that all teachers should carry out one live session per week in subjects where there are multiple weekly lessons or at least one Skype lesson every two weeks if a subject only has a weekly lesson. This session should be no shorter than 10 minutes and no longer than 30 minutes in length depending on the year group and the nature of the subject being taught. Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams/OneDrive are platforms that allow for resources to be shared, teachers to provide exposition, and pupils to ask questions in 'real-time'. Pupils will be provided with details on the sessions, and will be expected to participate in them if they are asked and able to. Live sessions can be particularly helpful as they can facilitate contemporaneous communication, with pupils able to respond to teachers' questions (and ask them) via the conversation functionality in Teams and meet. In a live session, there is no need for teachers or pupils to broadcast audio or video, as the text (conversation) function is adequate. Teachers who wish to use the audio/video functions must follow MTGS protocols and procedures to do this.

## **Assessment**

Providing timely and helpful feedback is a cornerstone of good teaching and learning, and whilst this may be more challenging with remote learning, teachers will endeavour to provide regular feedback to pupils on pieces of work that they are required to submit. Under normal circumstances, not all pieces of work are formally assessed by teachers and this would continue to be the case should the school employ remote learning.

Assessed work will be set using via the firefly tasks function, regardless of how pupils' work is eventually submitted, with clear due dates given to pupils for completion, thereby helping pupils to organise their time. The tasks function on firefly also allows pupils to submit work to the teacher before a task can be signed off.

Pupils and teachers should keep accurate records of all work completed, submitted and assessed. Given the nature of the tasks, the type of feedback teachers can provide may not have the same format as marking an exercise book. Teachers are encouraged to ensure, when they set assessed work, that it is designed in such a way that meaningful feedback may be provided. Possible methods may include:

- Providing whole class feedback rather than feedback on individual pieces of work – this is an effective way of providing feedback, supported by findings from educational research
- Using the "Comments" function on online documents on Microsoft
- Providing feedback directly in the tasks function on firefly
- Sending a direct email (or firefly message) to pupils with specific feedback / targets
- Feedback via another website / piece of software (e.g. OneNote, SenecaLearning, MyMaths)
- Recording oral feedback and sharing an audio file with the pupil via a Qwiqr code

Additional functionality is available in firefly, if teachers want to create assignments for pupils to complete. These might include, for example, the creation of a tailor-made quiz (containing

either multiple choice or extended answers) and teachers are able to use assignments to give feedback within firefly.

### **Expectations of pupils**

Assuming that a pupil is healthy and well enough to work, she will be expected to participate as fully as possible in the remote learning process, attend relevant live sessions, complete independent work, and submit assessed tasks promptly and to the best of her ability. Pupils will also be expected to read and respond to communication from the school (e.g. an email from a form tutor) on a regular basis. In the event of an extended school closure, teachers will continue to deliver content in line with existing schemes of work once the school is reopened; if any pupil misses significant parts of the content, they will be able to view material posted online and the school will give consideration to the practicalities of helping pupils to catch up once the school reopens. Pupils should ensure that, in addition to completing the tasks promptly, they should complete any administrative tasks that allow the school to monitor their progress. For example, where tasks are set using firefly, then they should mark tasks as “done” so teachers can monitor their progress. If pupils or parents have any questions about the nature of specific tasks set, these should be directed towards the relevant subject area. If there are questions about a pupil’s overall workload (e.g. a pupil feels they are overwhelmed or falling behind), these should be directed to the pupil’s Head of Year. Teachers must work on the assumption that pupils will not necessarily have the full range of books and equipment that they would usually have in school. However, if advance notice is possible, teachers will instruct pupils to take relevant equipment from their lockers home, or for parents to ensure they have duplicates.

The school does not expect pupils to have access to any specialist equipment that would usually be provided by the school (e.g. science or art). Teachers should ensure they are able to scan or upload photos of important resources in case pupils do not have access to them at home. Online textbooks are helpful in this regard and many subjects are now moving over to these. The school expects that parents have internet access at home to access remote learning resources, but teachers will make no presumption of the pupil’s ability to print at home.

### **Expectations of teachers (and subject departments)**

Teachers should ensure they have effective internet and a phone connectivity at home. If this is not available for any reason, teachers can request a school device. If there are IT related issues while remote working, teachers can contact the ICT Operations Manager via the service desk email. The setting and assessment of remote learning tasks will take place in accordance with school and subject area policies. Under normal circumstances, subject areas take different approaches to the setting and assessment of pupils’ work – for example, the frequency of substantive tasks set and the regularity of written assessment provided – and subject area policies will be applied in the event of remote learning. In order that we are providing a consistent approach, Heads of Department and subject leaders are responsible for overseeing the nature and frequency of tasks set and assessed within their subject areas. All teachers should pay due care to the nature of tasks set, so that pupils have a range of activities to complete at home and are not exclusively working on a screen. Heads of Department will monitor this and, if possible, should be included in the tasks set in firefly.

Teachers are responsible for providing constructive feedback to their pupils in a timely manner. Heads of Department are responsible for overseeing the form and regularity of feedback, and will liaise with SMT to ensure consistency.

In the event a teacher is unwell during a period of remote learning, it becomes the responsibility of the line manager to ensure work is set to her/his classes. Note that illness in these cases will be treated as normal and recorded in line with normal HR procedures with back to work discussions conducted remotely if required.

Subject departments are expected to:

- Plan and deliver 'live sessions' where appropriate in consultation with SMT (for any audio/video links)
- Respond to reasonable amounts of communication from pupils, parents and teachers
- Plan and set tasks for their pupils using the tasks functionality in firefly
- Be able to set and mark work promptly, in line with school and subject area policies, returning it to pupils electronically (or after the period of remote working for written and project work)

Teachers should be available to contact parents if needed, by email or phone (when phoning from personal devices, dialling 141 before the number will ensure the teacher's own number is kept anonymous). If contact is deemed excessive the line manager will be able to support and, if necessary, escalate to the Head of Section or a member of the SMT.

If parents ask for additional work beyond that set as part of the requirements above, subject areas should have a bank of general resources available in firefly, such as interactive websites and support activities, and point pupils and parents in that direction.

In order to ensure teachers are able to perform the minimum expectations outlined above, the school will provide, time permitting, a range of training opportunities that teachers should have access to before any planned school closure. Teachers should ensure that they have looked through specific instructions, watched walkthroughs and attended teacher training sessions. If teachers require support with any aspects of remote learning, they are encouraged to consult their line managers or SMT.

The relevant pages in firefly are a useful source of training – simply search for the element required. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, teachers will be expected to be contactable remotely by colleagues, pupils and parents. Teachers also should ensure their communication with pupils does not encourage unhelpful work habits. All communication should take place during usual office hours, with no expectation for colleagues to read or respond to emails after 4pm, although responses should be made to electronic messages within one working day in normal practice. For those who are on part-time contracts, communication is expected only on the days on which they would usually work.

Communication must always occur via official school channels, and not through personal accounts or other websites. Permitted methods are (please also see appendix regarding live links and flipped learning):

- Email using school email addresses only (both teachers and pupil)
- Firefly messaging (which can allow teachers to reply to an entire class)

### **Support for pupils with SEND, EAL and other specific learning enhancement needs**

Teachers should ensure that work is differentiated as required for all learners when setting online tasks. Profiles are available for SEND pupils and advice can be sought from the Head of Learning Support. In addition, the Head of Learning Support will maintain contact with pupils on their lists requiring regular support, by email or phone with parents/pupils and feed back to teachers using CPOMS if required.

### **Pastoral care during a school closure**

In event of a school closure, the primary responsibility for the pastoral care of a pupil rests with their parents / guardians. However, form tutors (under the guidance of the Heads of Section) should check in regularly with their tutees to monitor both academic progress and their general wellbeing. Form tutors will be expected to pass on feedback to Heads of Section, particularly if there are concerns or a lack of communication.

### **Safeguarding during a school closure**

In the event of a school closure, pupils, parents and teachers are reminded that the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy still applies to all interactions between pupils and teachers. In that policy, there are specifically prohibited behaviours and reporting obligations to which teachers must adhere, whether they are at home, in the community or at school.

### **Review of pupils' Progress Once the School re-opens**

Once the School re-opens, following a period of closure, it will seek to identify any gaps in pupils' progress and make any suitable adjustments (such as choices about what to prioritise) by putting in place a suitable action plan to get pupils back on track.

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January 2021

## **Appendix - remote working, flipped classroom, GDPR and safe working practice**

Please note that any remote working methods should adhere to GDPR guidelines.

Individual members of staff must complete a Risk Assessment (or update previous document if available) that evaluates the security and safety of teaching and learning practice from home with specific focus on the different challenges and context involved

In most cases remote working via shared documents and the tasks function on firefly will give you plenty of flexibility. However, you must use your MTGS account and if you are using flipped learning techniques, uploading videos to firefly or video conferencing, please ensure your background is blurred or neutral.

Instructions for setting up video conferencing and live links are available on Firefly. Live video links can be particularly useful for staff meetings or small groups, perhaps A Level, where spoken explanations are better than written ones. It is possible to record meetings in both Skype and Microsoft Teams. This could prove useful for possible reuse or to demonstrate safe working practice if needed.

Communicating via live text (e.g. conversations in Teams) does not require specific permission, however, and can be a good way to keep in touch with classes. Teachers must not set up or join social media groups for school use with pupils (such as WhatsApp, etc.). If you need to use any apps or materials that fall outside the MTGS network, please ensure you have discussed this with your line manager. Any possible GDPR queries should be resolved using the GDPR check in firefly, available through the staff links page in firefly.