



8 January 2021

Dear Parent

I hope you and your family are keeping well. This is to update you on school closure, remote learning and wellbeing support. A longer letter than usual, but please do read it all.

School closure

The Welsh Government has indicated that students will be required to remain at home learning online at least until the 29th January 2021. Given the current situation, we anticipate that they will, in all likelihood, extend this again to the February half term. Given this change, we are again reviewing our systems so that we support all students in this longer period of remote learning. Although the building is closed to most students, the teaching and learning carries on, and I would like to thank all of our staff for their adaptability and perseverance during a challenging week.

Qualifications - internal assessments cancelled

The internal assessments planned by the WJEC for GCSE, AS and A Level for this term have been cancelled. We have not yet been informed about how these will be replaced with regards to the awarding of qualifications this summer. Be assured that as soon as we receive this information, we will share this with you. Any decisions that we make will be taken to ensure that all students are treated fairly and achieve their potential this year. Their hard work and resilience at this challenging time must be rewarded appropriately. In the meantime, it is important that all students continue to work hard towards their qualifications to be thoroughly prepared for all types of assessment this year. [Click here](#) for the announcement from Qualifications Wales.

Remote learning

Here are two definitions of key terms that you might often hear:

Synchronous learning - often known as ‘live lessons’. This is where students are required to be online at a specific time in order to take part in an online lesson.

Asynchronous learning - otherwise known as ‘Learning On Demand’ or ‘recorded lessons’. This is where lessons are pre-recorded, with voiceovers, powerpoints and independent tasks. Students access these independently, which often suits family circumstances and prevents issues such as shared devices at home causing an issue.

During the first lengthier lockdown last academic year, MCS provided a mix of asynchronous and synchronous learning. However, we focussed on providing asynchronous learning during the shorter firebreak lockdown, the various times when groups of students were required to self-isolate, and the week preceding the Christmas break. Our decision was based on research evidence from bodies such as the Education Endowment Fund, alongside our own pedagogical understanding of the efficacy of asynchronous learning, and feedback from



students and parents that the more flexible approach of asynchronous learning suited differing home circumstances and arrangements during these shorter periods of remote learning.

Our initial remote learning approach for this lockdown has again been asynchronous, alongside 1:1 wellbeing phone calls by Form Tutors and others. However, given the new longer period of remote learning, we have again reviewed our approach to ensure that it meets the needs of our students in this new situation. As a result of this review, we will expand our synchronous learning aspect of remote learning and wellbeing support from w/c 18th January. This will be as follows:

- ★ A weekly live seminar for each subject for Years 10-13
- ★ Weekly live wellbeing group check in for each Form Tutor and tutor group Years 7-13
- ★ Additional bespoke support for exam groups, dependent on subject, current topic and specific requirement of the learning

We are looking at the possibility of introducing live seminars for Years 7-9, and will update you in due course.

All synchronous learning will be on Google Meet, which is part of Google Classroom. This is to ensure that we keep to one platform. It is intuitive and straightforward, and we already use Google Classroom as our main learning platform. We will share videos and tips to support students in using this.

It's important to note that synchronous learning will not be identical across our range of subjects, and subject teachers will adapt their approach according to what is required and the needs of students in that subject and class.

We want to support students and to not pressurise them during this exceptionally difficult time. Attendance will be expected, but we do understand that sometimes students might miss a session due to particular home circumstances. In order to ameliorate the possible impact of this, we will record all live sessions and they will be available afterwards to the group.

We have learned a lot from our experiences of delivering remote learning in the time since the start of the first lockdown. We have invested heavily in equipment and training for both staff and students, and have published guides for all stakeholders regarding remote learning. This situation puts a great deal of pressure on everyone, but I am confident that this approach is sustainable and appropriate. If we can help further with hardware, access, or development of skills on online platforms then please let us know.

All parents should have now been invited to become a part of their student's Google Classrooms. A guide on how to use this function as a guardian can be found [by clicking here](#).

I hope this information is helpful and clear, but please do contact the school with any queries. We are absolutely determined to support all of our students as well as we possibly can through this period of remote learning. We wish you all the best at this tumultuous time.

Yours sincerely

Hugo Hutchison