



St. Thomas More High School

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15th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we end our first full week of remote learning, I know from the emails and messages of thanks from parents, that staff and students have made massive efforts to work together on improving their engagement with Microsoft Teams this week whether through live lesson, video PowerPoint, electronic quiz or assignment. Well done everyone but remember this is a marathon not a sprint and a diet of variety will keep everyone motivated over the next 4 weeks until half term.

Attendance

Staff are completing their lesson registers in the usual way. Therefore, if your child is going to be absent from their lessons and they are unable to attend, **please use the absence line to report this or for COVID related absences please use the [Electronic COVID absence form](#)** It is vital you keep us informed as we are asked for a daily DfE attendance return and we cannot be accurate with this information.

Equally, if staff are unable to attend due to absence, we will alert students via their lesson channel that the 'live' lesson will not be held and students should work on the lesson that is posted on Teams. Your support, patience and understanding of staff at this time is gratefully appreciated.

School Calendar

Considering the national restrictions now in force, we are reviewing all our scheduled events. **Year 8 Options Information Evening** is now moved to Thursday May 6th and we will write to parents of Year 8 with details of this process after the Easter holiday.

Progress reports will be produced according to the usual timetable and will include information about your child's engagement with their remote learning.

The **VTQ's public examinations** which have now been cancelled for the beginning of February, we are offering students who have been preparing so hard to take these exams, the opportunity to sit a formal mock in school, to assess their learning as per the original examination timetable. Please discuss this with your class teacher during your lessons in the coming weeks. This is an opportunity to take a mock exam but is not compulsory.

Remote Learning

In this week's Contact we have included lots of useful links for accessing Teams and how to submit and receive work using the assignments tab. All students should be checking their calendar either via Teams or Outlook to view and join live lessons, checking their Teams posts page and email at their timetabled lesson time. We have reviewed and updated our [Remote Learning Policy](#) with a Code of Conduct for staff, students and parents for live lessons. Please take time to familiarise yourself with this over the weekend.

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Helping your Children at Home

Routine - being educated at home is very different to being in a school environment and routine is key. Doing a chunk of focused work each day along their timetable, with the breaks needs to be balanced with free time and/or creative activities.

Fresh air - fresh air is good for our health and exercise is an important part of our daily lives. Fresh air has been shown to help us digest food more effectively, improve blood pressure, heart rate, and strengthen our immune systems. It also makes us happier by promoting higher levels of positive emotions.

Support - isolation has a negative effect on mental health and happiness. Children need some independence and time to connect with others. They also need reassurance, kindness and love so keep an eye on your child's happiness, emotions and moods.

Keep updated - maintain a positive relationship with your child's school and teachers to find out what measures will be in place to support your child's learning. Keep up to date with the news daily so you are aware of the current situation and any new guidelines.

Covid testing for those eligible for a priority in-school place:

A reminder to help us keep school safe, if you are or planning to take up a priority in school place, **we urge you to please have your child and family tested for coronavirus before your child returns to school, even if you have no symptoms and have obtained a negative test result before.**

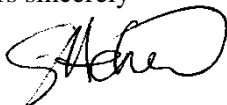
Please do not get a test if you have had a positive test in the last 12 weeks as it may give an incorrect positive result.

Southend continue to increase the capacity and number of mobile testing centres available to you locally, as below:

- **Hamlet Court Road car park.** Walk-through mobile testing unit. Open 7 days a week (8am to 4pm). No need to book for this site.
- **Southend Airport, Long Stay Car Park 3, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6YE.** A mobile testing unit site open 7 days per week 9am-3pm. Please book through the national system <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- **Short Street Walk** -through and appointments booked through the national system <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> Open 7 days a week 8am-8pm.
- **Southend University, University Square,** Southend-on-Sea (entrance opposite Sainsbury's). You must have no symptoms to attend this site. Open 7 days a week (7am-3pm) by appointment only via [this link](#)
- **Aidan's Church, The Fairway, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 4QW.** You must have no symptoms to attend this site. Open 7 days a week 7am-6pm (2-6pm on Monday 11 January) booking via [this link](#)

Full information about how to get a test is available on [Southend website](#)

Yours sincerely



Mrs G Ackred
Headteacher