



# Holy Cross

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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HEADTEACHER **Mr I Gaughan BA**

January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Firstly, thank you to our pupils for engaging so well with remote learning: last week 98.3% of pupils engaged through Teams; over 700 live lessons were delivered; and 21,509 Teams chats took place. Thank you to parents for supporting this. I would also like to thank our staff for maintaining their delivery of our curriculum. This will put our pupils in a strong position when normal life resumes, and it will.

### **Remote Learning Concerns**

Home Learning is challenging for pupils, parents and staff. It is difficult to estimate how much work to set and we would rather set too much than too little. But we know that some pupils are doing too much work and feeling stressed.

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 shouldn't be doing more than five hours work a day. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 should be doing a little more. We trust parents to monitor the amount of work children are doing. You will know if your child is working hard; every child does not need to do every single piece of work.

There are always concerns about screen time and we are trying to set more blended learning with live teaching accounting for about 50% of lessons. If you think your child needs a break from the screen, you can ask them to come off line for a short time. Teachers will not be chasing up individual missed lessons. We are monitoring attendance and engagement and we will contact parents where there is serial and prolific non-engagement, or a lack of overall progress.

Organisation is key to engagement, progress and maintaining good mental health. On the school website in the remote learning section, you will find additional updated information regarding remote learning including a child friendly remote learning guide for staying safe online, a pupil guide to Office 365 and Teams, the pupil remote learning policy and a remote learning provision booklet for parents along with website links to support parents with distance learning. There is also a daily organiser which many pupils and parents have found useful.

To help you and your children (and our staff) we are going to introduce some planned 'down time' starting on Friday 12 February. Normal lessons will be delivered for periods 1 and 2 and the remainder of the day will be given over to reflection, mindfulness activities and the opportunity for pupils to spend some time away from their screens to do something completely different. After half term, for the duration of lockdown, we will do something similar every fortnight.

Our teachers have been instructed not to set any work over half term and our strong advice to pupils is to log off and have a proper break from 'normal' studies and excessive screen time. Wellbeing Wednesday continues to be posted on Show My Homework and pupils can access advice and support through that if they need it.

Over the next few weeks, form tutors and pastoral staff will be making wellbeing check-in calls to your child. To make this process more efficient, we will be contacting the pupils directly through Teams to set up individual one-to-one meetings.

None of this is easy and no decisions are entirely right or entirely wrong. We are committed to working with you to keep our children safe, healthy and making academic progress. Ultimately, it's about balance.

### **Contacting school**

Protocols for contacting school remain the same. Parents/carers must not use the chat section in Teams to make contact with a member of staff. We understand that this is not always easy, but know you appreciate the importance of this for safeguarding reasons. If you have any questions regarding remote learning or anything else, please do not hesitate to contact us through [admin@holycross.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@holycross.lancs.sch.uk).

### **Furniture**

We know that some families are finding desk space an issue. If you need a table and chair for your child to work at, please let us know and we will bring you one.

### **Year 11**

The consultation about how to award GCSE grades is ongoing. What is clear, quite rightly, is that there will be strong emphasis on evidence required from teachers in setting pupils' grades. Our best advice is still that Year 11 should continue to engage fully in remote learning as this is where the evidence for grades will come from. It is also very much in pupils' best interests to keep mentally active so that they are prepared for the next stage in their education.

### **Year 9 Options**

The closing date for the return of Options Forms is Thursday 4 February. All the information and guidance you need is available on our school website.

### **Life goes on**

Despite the obvious restrictions we are continuing to plan and prepare for the future. We have, in the past few weeks, appointed five excellent new teachers to start in September and re-secured funding to extend our dining facilities which will hopefully be built over the summer.

Our pupils have shown incredible resilience in coping with lockdown and the strangeness of remote learning. I am incredibly proud of them and we all look forward to welcoming them back as soon as we can. You can see some of the outstanding things they are doing on Twitter (@holycrosschorl) and we welcome any interesting items they want to send in, academic or otherwise.

Thank you for the many kind messages you have sent in; all of us at Holy Cross appreciate your support.

Please keep an eye on our school website for updates and guidance. Stay safe and let us know if we can support you in any way.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



Mr I Gaughan  
Headteacher