

Dear Parents,

I should start by wishing all RGS families a Happy New Year though the new national lockdown means this is not the letter I wanted to send at the beginning of the new Term.

I am sure that you will have seen the Prime Minister's announcement last night, which includes the closure of schools to all but vulnerable children or the children of critical workers (see criteria [here](#)). For completeness, the full announcement is available [here](#).

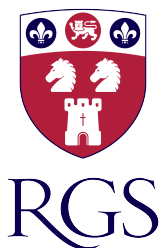
Before I address the practicalities, I wanted to share a message of reassurance to parents and I shall be giving a similar positive message to students in an online assembly at the beginning of Term. While many families will understandably feel disheartened by the latest lockdown, I encourage us all to be optimistic that better days are in sight. Students, parents and staff all pulled together and worked through the Spring and Summer lockdown last year, and we have risen to the challenges of a series of student isolations in the Autumn. We will do so again and, like last time, we will reopen the school the moment we are able to. This time round we also know that vaccines are being rolled out.

We are all incredibly fortunate to be part of the RGS community and I am sure we will once again benefit from our solidarity.

Overview of practicalities

From Thursday the 7th of January, the Spring Term will commence with all students being taught remotely using Microsoft Teams. Many of our pupils will have experienced remote learning as it evolved at the RGS last year though I am very conscious that we have a significant number of students new to the school this year. I hope all are already familiar with the use of Microsoft Teams

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and OneNote from work last term and for those who are unsure there is guidance available on the Student Hub in Teams.

As in the previous lockdown, the children of critical workers in Y9 and below as well as vulnerable children will be entitled to be supervised in school. If you have not already indicated that your child is eligible/you wish them to come into school this week or next week, please complete the form [here](#) for Senior School and [here](#) for Junior School as soon as possible but no later than 6pm this evening so that we can plan their supervision as they engage with the same lessons that children working from home will receive. We will then send a weekly form asking you to confirm which day(s) your child(ren) will attend. All other children will learn from home. Whether they are in school or learning from home, all students will access the same timetable and lessons.

For the benefit of parents, it is also worth looking at our Covid resources webpages which have much useful information and can be found [here](#). Given that only yesterday we were prioritising preparations for mass testing of pupils in school, please bear with us as we confirm all remote learning arrangements; more detailed information (which varies slightly for the Junior and Senior Schools) will follow. In summary, however, below is a very brief overview of our pastoral, academic and cocurricular approach:

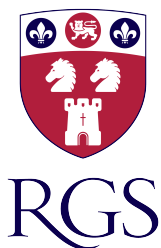
Pastoral matters

All of our students can expect daily contact from their Form Supervisor if they are in the Senior School, or from their Form Teacher in the Junior School. They will monitor wellbeing, check that students are coping with remote learning, and be that point of support should they find something challenging.

Senior School:

Each child in Y7 to Y13 will be expected to attend the usual daily registration and Form time with their Form Supervisor at 1.05pm to 1.30pm. If you feel your child is not coping with any aspect of remote learning then we would encourage you to contact their Form Supervisor via email. Their Head of Year will also be keeping a close eye on how students are getting on and can offer

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support and guidance should you or your child feel they need it. We will still be providing our counselling service to our students via a Teams call and lots of advice on wellbeing and support can be found in the Student Hub on Teams.

We appreciate that for some this will be their first experience of remote learning as an RGS student, and it is likely to bring a new set of challenges. *A Guide to Remote-Learning* was originally put together for Y7s but we would encourage all parents and students to read this. If your child is unwell and not able to attend remote lessons, then please email their Form Supervisor to let them know.

Junior School:

There will be live registrations each morning which we hope all children will be able to attend. Anyone unable to attend (we understand issues around device availability etc) must send an email to their Form Teacher who will register them as 'present' for the day. For any children who are too poorly to work, we require a parental email to their Form Teacher to let us know. Please use your child's Form Teacher as the first port of call with regard to any pastoral matters.

Academic matters

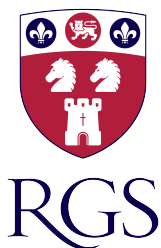
Junior School:

A Remote Learning Timetable will be issued by the end of tomorrow outlining which lessons will be taking place and when, along with details on what to expect from Junior School Teachers. The breadth of the curriculum will be maintained but, based on our previous experience, the frequency of lessons will be slightly amended. James Miller will write with more details on this.

Senior School:

All class groups are set up as separate Teams and students should notify the teacher in the event that they are not part of their relevant Teams classes. Students are encouraged to download the Teams app which seems to

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be more reliable than the browser version. I should note that there will, inevitably, be occasions where technology fails, either for the teacher or the pupil. While we will do our best to limit the former, in either circumstance we must be pragmatic and have patience.

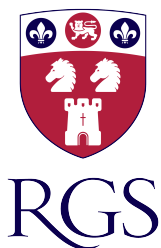
As in school, lessons will follow the usual timetable and will be delivered through a mixture of online, face to face teaching plus allocated tasks to be completed independently, with an appropriate balance away from the screen. Activities in each lesson will vary, as they would do in school and parents should anticipate that work will be set for every lesson of the timetable with a mix of online and offline tasks. This means that students must be prepared to work from the start until the end of the school day. *Livestreamed lessons* will at least start and end with teacher contact. The teacher will be visible on screen for at least part of the lesson and will be interacting live; students should have cameras on and expect to make a contribution! *Other lessons* will consist of work set through Teams that is either preparatory (the work needs to be done to prepare for the next lesson) or consolidatory (the work builds on the previous lesson). These activities may involve reading books or articles and taking notes, watching videos, undertaking exercises from books or online resources, or making and creating as appropriate. In *sports' lessons* games teacher(s) will perform a 20/25 min live functional movement warm up. The relevant session will then be uploaded for students to follow at home. PE/swimming lessons will have work set if possible that is relevant to the activity, if not a fitness session.

The primary method of communication with students will be via Teams – meetings, posts or chat (where 1:1 is necessary) and not email. If email is used it must be the school email and not a personal account. All work will be set through Teams Assignments, even basic instructions to watch something or read something so that all students have the same instructions. Student work should also be submitted to teachers via Teams.

Co-curricular activities

Our immediate priority is to get our remote pastoral and academic systems set up again, so please bear with us while we explore options for remote sport,

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music and other extracurricular activities and clubs. More information on these will follow soon.

Other practicalities

All students, before Thursday, should refamiliarise themselves with logging in and check if they have any problems accessing their account. We appreciate that a number of Senior School students will have books and resources left in their lockers. If this is the case then please reassure your child that many are in the same situation and their teachers will understand so they should not worry but just message their teachers to let them know. Junior School staff are equally aware that children have taken limited resources home and we will provide what the children will need.

For the small number of students being supervised in school, we would encourage them to bring a device on which they can access Office 365 into school with them. Please do not forget chargers and headphones (with mic).

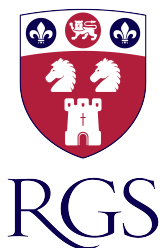
In terms of dress code, students attending school will not be required to wear school uniform. Senior School students are asked to still wear their lanyards. Students attending remote lessons should be up and dressed appropriately for the start of the school day, for example no pyjamas, no excessive bare skin please.

Students attending school will be provided with lunch and charged retrospectively based on the number of days that they come in.

Exam year groups

This final point is particular to parents and students in public exam year groups. I understand that the Education Secretary is expected to make a statement about exams shortly but we remain committed to ensuring that all of our students are in the best possible position for their next steps. HMC have put out a statement this morning that a decision to cancel exams would be premature and that the question is more what form these examinations should

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take. Once we have more information from Ofqual/DfE about the way forward I will communicate more detail but, in the meantime, we will continue to cover course specifications and students should be fully focused on preparing for the Internal Exams that are still planned for after half term.

As ever, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us. In the first instance Junior School families should email Form Teachers and Senior School families should contact Form Supervisors or the relevant Head of Year in the event of a particular concern. Alternatively, please email communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk and we will do our best to help.

I will undoubtedly be in touch again very soon. In the meantime, I send you and all your family my very best wishes,

Geoffrey Stanford
Headmaster

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