



Covid-19 Update 5 January 2021

Following the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday evening, this bulletin is intended to provide you with further information about Godolphin's lockdown plan for the weeks ahead. It is with sadness and a degree of frustration that we are again moving to online learning. Nonetheless it is clear that this new strain of the coronavirus circulating within our communities is more transmissible and schools should do their utmost to keep staff and students safe. We now at least have some certainty for the foreseeable future. We are confident with our GO Digital learning platform and whilst not physically together we can do a great deal to help and support our students through this challenging time. We will continue to provide you with regular Covid-19 Updates throughout the term.

Academic matters

Online lessons have made a promising start today with students showing the resilience determination and enthusiasm that makes us immensely proud of them. Please do be in touch with us if there were teething problems that did not settle down quickly. Our experience of online lessons is that they are effective in keeping the students on track in terms of their academic work, and even building additional skills not so manifest in the classroom. The down side of learning in such a constrained way is that the range of teaching techniques are more limited, and the scope for movement curtailed. In order to help in this respect we have shortened the lessons slightly to allow more movement time between lessons, and we encourage the girls to make use of that time to stretch and grab some fresh air.

We are mindful that the online environment places additional pressures on students, and we do not want to compound that, however, we also saw last year the value of prep continuing over the remote learning period. It is in that time that the students develop the independent skills, and stretch their development most. For that reason essential prep will still be set. If it is possible to set activities that do not require a screen teachers will be keen to take that option.

For exam year groups, this is again a very difficult day, and the news coverage does not really help to distinguish fact from speculation. At this stage we do not know what format the assessment in the Summer will take, but at the moment we are assuming that the syllabus content will not vary, so learning should progress as normal. Irrespective of how students are assessed, improving their knowledge and skills now will always be to their benefit. Our priority is to support them in every way possible, by teaching the specifications as intended, but preparing them for the changes and uncertainty that are inevitable. This support is especially important for the BTEC students who have external assessments due in the very near future, and are currently still scheduled to run as normal.

The Mock examinations expected by the Fifth years are an important opportunity to rehearse exam technique, and also to provide evidence of their learning. A great deal of effort has already been invested by students in preparation for these and we are keen to see that effort harnessed in a formal way. We are currently adapting our approach to best serve all the competing needs and we will let the girls know the details as soon as possible.

We are providing a full timetable, with practical subjects employing significant creativity to allow learning, engagement and enthusiasm to shine through in difficult circumstances. The PE department are on hand in every timetabled lesson to ensure that individuals are able to realise the benefits of physical activity, be that in front of the screen, or beyond in the "real world"!

Pastoral Information

Tutor Time and wellbeing - All students are expected to touch base with their tutor every morning. We will follow our usual timetable of Tuesday and Wednesday online Prayers and tutor time on the remaining days. Tutors will be touching base with individuals and parents regularly during lockdown. Lessons will be an hour long, allowing a 10-minute break to refresh and stretch. We would like to remind all students to make sure they have added/reinstated the Extra-Curricular Team (which may be hidden at the bottom of their Teams page). There are several movement breaks from Sister Gill as well as some yoga workouts and stretches. We are adding to these during the coming weeks. Students can also find some new Zumba workouts from 'Girlslovesfit' to help stay active during lockdown. It is really important to be mindful of your working position and to have regular breaks from your screen. Please do not be on your phone to your peers during lessons.

Boarding - We are waiting for further information in terms of our boarding community and our thoughts are very much with our International Boarders. We are seeking further guidance from the BSA and the DfE but we must adhere to the government guidelines and at present, regrettably, it does not look like we can allow boarders on site.

Books from Lockers - If you would like to collect any books from your locker, please contact your Housemistress or Head of Year (Third Years & Sixth Form Sarums) to arrange a convenient time. You must enter school alone please.

Asymptomatic COVID Testing in School

Thank you to all the parents – a fabulous 35 at the time of writing – who have kindly volunteered to be part of the testing team for asymptomatic students and staff. We have piloted the online training scheme with School staff followed by a hands-on training session, so we now have a number of staff trained to carry out the tests of those who need to be in School. These tests are now underway. With face-to-face education suspended, we will not look to train parent volunteers in the immediate future but wait until the return to School is more imminent when it is likely we will need to test a large number of individuals. If we return after the February half-term, for example, we may seek to train you before the half-term. Mr Dain will email those who have volunteered with details of the training at that time.

Extracurricular Activities

Although in lockdown we have to change the scope and nature of the activities on offer, there are activities running. This week, individual music lessons continue (albeit online), as will Mandarin lessons, and from next week we have a number of activities planned together with several 'challenges' to help keep your children happy, healthy and inquisitive. Mr Dain is in contact with key departments and individual staff and will provide more detail in The Blue Pinny on Friday.

Key worker children in the Senior

If your daughter cannot be cared for safely at home and parents are key workers, she is welcome to come to School. She will be based in Walters House (our First and Second Year House) where staff will ensure she has a place to work where she can access her online lessons. If you are in the key worker category, unable to work from home and you need your daughter to be in School, please contact Mr Dain on dainr@godolphin.org

Financial Matters

The Governors will be meeting to review the fees over the lockdown period, more information will follow. As before, any requests for financial support will go through the means tested bursary process (contact the School Business Manager for more information).

Reception

The School site is closed with only skeleton staff and the vast majority working from home. Godolphin Reception, (Main School number 01722 430500) will be manned in the mornings but not in the afternoon, so if you have any problems please can we ask that you contact staff directly via email.

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