



19 January 2021

Dear students, parents, and carers

I would like to start by thanking all students, staff and parents for your support by making the first fortnight of term successful in such challenging circumstances.

Live Teams lessons and online learning

Teachers, students and parents have commented they are becoming more confident in using Microsoft Teams and that despite the occasional glitch the Teams lessons are going well. Average attendance for Teams lessons is now close to 95% across the school. Year Leaders are phoning parents in the small number of cases, where students are not logging onto lessons.

I have attached our guide to online learning which details how we expect students to work online, how we will give feedback to students, answers some common questions we receive from students, gives technical advice and contains a list of email addresses for all staff.

It is difficult for students and teachers to work continuously for prolonged periods of time on a computer, we have therefore tweaked lesson times so that there is a 10-minute gap between lessons so that students and staff can stretch their legs. The slightly revised times, which are listed below, also give a thirty-minute morning break and just over an hour for lunch so that students have time to get some exercise and to prepare and eat some lunch

Lesson One:	09.00-09.50
Lesson Two:	10.00-10.50
Break:	10.50-11.20
Lesson Three:	11.20-12.10
Lunch:	12.10-13.20
Lesson Four:	13.20-14.10
Lesson Five:	14.20-15.10

On a Tuesday for students in Year 8, Year 10 or Year 11 who have an after-school lesson this will be scheduled from 15.30 to 16.15.

We are also asking teachers to incorporate some practical activities into lessons, so students can have more varied tasks, rather than always being sat down at a computer. For the next six school weeks there will be Parents' Evenings on Thursday from 16.30 to 19.00. To avoid the situation where teachers spend 5 hours teaching from a computer and then a further two and a half hours on the computer at the Parents' Evening, we are suggesting to teachers that they may wish to set two of their lessons via epraise on Thursdays from Monday 28 January.

Due to the demands of running Skeleton School, there will be occasions where a teacher is required to supervise at short notice. On these occasions the teacher will inform their class that work for their session will be on epraise which will replace the live Teams lesson.

To encourage participation in physical activity, PE teachers will be giving a short 5-minute introduction to lessons to enthuse and encourage students to join in fully. PE teachers will also mark a register for these lessons.

We are keen to learn more about how the Teams lessons are going from students' and parents' point of view. Therefore, we would encourage you to complete the feedback form which can be accessed via the link below, **by 12 noon on Wednesday 27 January 2021.**

[Parental Feedback Form: Online learning at JMHS, January 2021](#)

Laptops and devices for online learning

Research about online learning has shown that students can successfully engage with learning on a range of devices including phones, tablets, play stations, Xboxes, laptops and desktop computers. However, the research also indicated that students working on laptops were able to focus for longer periods of time and therefore make better progress than students working on their phones. Mr Hammond, our Assistant Headteacher, has been working hard to distribute Chrome Book laptops to families where students do not have access to a computer. Please contact Mr Hammond at Peter.hammond@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk if you wish to be considered for the loan of a laptop.

Skeleton School

We now have approximately 50 bookings for vulnerable students and children of key workers each day. Students who are attending, are concentrating well and are maintaining social distancing. They complete the same lessons via Teams as children at home, whilst being supervised by teaching assistants with regular visits from Year Leaders.

The definition of students who can attend skeleton school can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

If your child meets the criteria and you need to book a place, please email Mr Collard at the andy.collard@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk and try to give us several days' notice. If you need to cancel a Skeleton School booking, please could you contact Mr Collard to do so.

Asymptomatic Testing Programme for COVID-19

A dedicated team consisting of 10 members of our support staff team have this week carried out 140 lateral flow tests for staff members. The tests have been extremely well organised and efficient. In addition to testing staff on a weekly basis, our testing team have commenced testing of students who are attending Skeleton School. I would like to thank and congratulate the testing team, who are all volunteers and are making an excellent contribution to keeping us all safe. I would also like to thank parents and carers of students attending Skeleton School for giving their consent and students for taking these voluntary tests. By doing so students are helping to keep themselves, their family and their peers safe.

Parents' Evenings

Unfortunately, we had to abandon our first virtual Parents' Evening which was for Year 7 and reschedule for Thursday 4 February. This decision was taken because of a fault in the SchoolCloud system that prevented teachers logging in to their appointments until after 5pm. We received the following message from SchoolCloud, who host the virtual Parents' Evenings on Friday.

'SchoolCloud experienced an outage yesterday between 4pm and 5:04pm. Yesterday did not live up to the high expectations schools have come to expect from us nor what we expect of our ourselves, especially at this difficult time for schools. Combined with a performance improvement to the teacher's My Bookings page, we're confident that we will not see any repeat of this issue. We will continue to monitor loads on all aspects of our infrastructure during parents' evenings to ensure we have sufficient capacity to handle rapid growth.'

We would like to apologise to Year 7 parents for the inconvenience caused and hope you are able to make the rearranged date. Other schools who ran Parents' Evenings in the Autumn Term using SchoolCloud have reported that they worked well. Parents will receive communications from the Year Leader giving details about each Parents' Evening.

Grades for Year 11 and Year 13

Ofqual have announced a consultation on how grades are to be awarded. If you wish to contribute to the consultation, please use the link below:

<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2021/01/15/how-2021-could-look-for-students-and-learners-we-want-your-views/>

Year 8 students' subject choices for GCSE and vocational qualifications

Mrs Laidler has written to Year 8 parents explaining the process by which their children will be guided in choosing their Key Stage Four courses. This commences this week with the virtual online chat evening this Thursday from 6pm to 7.30pm, tutor sessions to help students make wise choices, followed by appointments for individual students with senior staff via Teams to fill in a proforma making a provisional choice of subjects. Parents are most welcome to be present at these appointments. If parents have any questions about the process, please email Y8choices@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk.

Training afternoon Monday 1 February

On Monday 1 February we will have the first of our two staff training afternoons this term. Teachers will be looking at ways to maximise the effectiveness of online learning and on curriculum planning.

Teachers will teach live lessons during the morning for periods one to three, but there will not be any lessons after 12.15. Students can choose whether to enjoy an afternoon off or to use the time to revise topics covered so far this term.

Students attending Skeleton School will finish between 12.10 and 12.20. Year 7 will finish at 12.10, Year 8 and Year 9 at 12.15 and Year 10 and Year 11 at 12.20. As the number of students attending Skeleton School are small, parents wishing to come in by car are welcome to drive into the car park at this time. If any students need to travel by school transport on this date, please could you let us know by emailing admin@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk.

Events and key dates for the Spring Term

- Thursday 21 January 2021: Year 8 Choices Evening – Virtual 6pm to 7.30pm
- Thursday 28 January 2021: Year 12 & Year 13 Parents' Evening – Virtual
- Monday 1 February 2021: Staff Training Afternoon – Lessons finish at 12.15pm
- Thursday 4 February 2021: Year 7 Parents' Evening – Virtual
- Thursday 11 February 2021: Year 8 Parents' Evening - Virtual
- Monday 15 February 2021 – Friday 19 February 2021: Half Term
- Thursday 25 February 2021: Year 10 Parents' Evening - Virtual
- Thursday 4 March 2021: Year 9 Parent' Evening – Virtual
- Tuesday 9 March 2020: Staff Training Afternoon – students depart at 12.10/12.25pm
- Thursday 11 March 2020: Year 11 Parents' Evening – Virtual
- Thursday 1 April 2020: Term ends at 3.15pm

... And finally

I would like to thank you all for your continuing support and encourage you to complete the questionnaire about our online lessons. I will personally read every response and your feedback will be used to help us make improvements

With my very best wishes



Andrew Evans
Headteacher