



1 February 2021

Dear students, parents and carers

Contents

- 1. Introduction and future plans**
- 2. Live Teams lessons and online learning**
- 3. Curriculum Plans for the Spring Term**
- 4. Skeleton School**
- 5. Laptops and devices for online learning**
- 6. Asymptomatic Testing Programme for COVID-19**
- 7. Grades for Year 11 and Year 13**
- 8. Prefect Application Process for Year 10**
- 9. Communications with students and parents/carers**
- 10. Events and key dates for the Spring Term**

1. Introduction and future plans

Last week the Prime Minister announced that the earliest dates schools could return for all students would be Monday 8 March, but that the return date may be later than this depending on infection rates, hospital admissions etc. We are planning for a return on Monday 8 March, so that we are ready if we can fully open the school on this date and we will be delighted if this is the case.

We are also aware that the 8 March is five weeks away and that the lockdown may be extended further. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that we work to continually improve the quality of online learning. Our strategy to improve online learning is summarised below.

1. Focus on learning the curriculum and effective teaching, so students do not fall further behind and teaching strategies are based on evidence of what works well
2. Share the full results of the parental survey with staff, so teachers can see the feedback for themselves, reflect on their teaching and adjust or change where this would be beneficial
3. Ensure rooms are equipped with good quality microphones, interactive touchscreens, and visualizers with cameras, so all teachers have the resources they need to develop their online teaching
4. Encourage use of 'Teams Assignments' to streamline submission of work and assessment
5. Encourage strategies to give time away from the screen, particularly in practical subjects
6. Encourage teachers and faculties to collaborate, try new ideas and share those ideas that work to achieve continuing improvement
7. Ensure all students can work from home with laptops, internet connection and support from staff with those not able to work from home attending skeleton school.

All staff are striving to provide the best quality of education they can in the current circumstances, and we believe that the strategy outlined above will support the staff and students in achieving this.

2. Live Teams lessons and online learning

I would like to thank all parents, carers and students who completed our survey about online learning. We had over 270 responses with each respondent spending an average of 12 minutes completing the form. I have read

every response to the survey and spent a considerable amount of time discussing the responses with teachers, focussing in particular on finding ways to further increase engagement in lessons.

The table below summarises responses to the survey.

Question		Results
How many of the online lessons has your son or daughter accessed?		All & Nearly all = 87% Most = 10%
How well has your son or daughter engaged with online lessons?		All of the time = 36% Most of the time = 51%
How useful has your son or daughter found the online lessons so far?		Very useful = 40% Quite useful = 52%
How useful has communication been from JMHS this term?		Very useful = 72% Quite useful = 25%
What has been good about the online lessons so far?	<p>Summary of most common responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a structure and the normal timetable • Live lessons with constant encouragement from the teacher • Teacher enthusiasm and energy • Teachers teaching the full curriculum • Clear and helpful explanations • When you can see the teacher's face • Live demonstrations with the camera switched on • Tasks that take students away from the computer • Careful explanation of content • The closest you can get to a proper lesson • Balancing excellent teaching with time for the students to work • Posting powerpoint online and tasks on epraise especially if Teams does not work • Reviewing topics previously covered • Good balance of teacher exposition and time to work on tasks • Interactive and energetic sessions • Giving housepoints and rewards • Having personalised feedback • Having enough time to eat and having short breaks between the lessons • Lessons always start on time • Challenging and interesting tasks • Teachers staying online after exposition/explanation • Positive responses from teachers when work is submitted • Games like noughts and crosses, Teams chat challenge • Interactive quizzes • Teachers asking individuals questions • Receiving help after asking via the chat box • Tasks which show you how well you're learning 	
What could be improved about the online lessons?	<p>Summary of most common responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers having cameras switched on • More practicals/varied content • Unmute microphones more often • Practical demonstrations from the teacher • Give more house points or rewards • More quizzes/feedback opportunities • Opportunities to let parents know how students are doing • Improved sound quality at times • Slower explanations in some subjects • Encourage physical movement, exercise and students getting away from the screen • Monitoring performance of pupils eg some work hard but do not contribute to chats in the team • More written work returned to students 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less written work and homework • Sticking precisely to start and finish times • Requiring submission of written work in most or all lessons
How can we improve communication and help you more at this time?	<p>Summary of main responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News updates for students • More information about exams and how to maximise your chances for Year 11 and Year 13 • Sixth Form & Year Group Newsletters • Remind students to check school email • Feedback from tutors for parents, once a month?

We are extremely grateful for the feedback and the overwhelming support from parents and carers. In speaking with the teachers as I walk around the school this term, it is clear that they are putting a tremendous amount of effort into learning how to deliver the live streamed lessons effectively using Teams, making the lessons as engaging as possible and motivating the students to learn. They are working with their teaching colleagues and giving this huge challenge their very best shot in the most challenging of circumstances and deserve great credit for this.

I also appreciate how learning at home is much more difficult for many of our students and that it is not easy for families in supporting students working from home. Like staff at JMHS, so many students are doing a great job and deserve our congratulations. If your son or daughter is struggling to work from home and engage with lessons, we would encourage you to contact your child's Year Leader.

3. Curriculum Plans for the Spring Term

During the last fortnight of the Autumn Term teachers prepared a summary of the topics to be covered this term with key learning points listed for each topic for posting on the school website so that parents and students could see an overview for the term. With lockdown it was necessary to change the topics in some subjects. We therefore asked curriculum leaders to amend their curriculum summaries for the Spring Term which are now being placed on the website and can be viewed through the link below:

<https://www.jmhs.hereford.sch.uk/spring-2021-curriculum/>

Please note that as we do not know when the current lockdown will finish, the topics covered may change later on in the term for some subjects.

4. 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 Chromebook 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.

5. 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.

6. Asymptomatic Testing Programme for COVID-19

Our testing team has now completed two lateral flow tests for every student who is attending Skeleton School and has given consent for testing. This is nearly all the students who have attended Skeleton School. We would like to thank all of the parents and students who gave consent as this is a helpful contribution to keeping everyone safe. In addition, the testing team are carrying out approximately 140 staff tests per week. We greatly appreciate the excellent work of the volunteers who are members of our testing team in making JMHS a safer place to work and learn.

7. Grades for Year 11 and Year 13

We are still awaiting information from the DFE and OFQUAL on how GCSE, A-Level or vocational grades are to be awarded in 2021. As we do not know how the grades will be awarded and whether students will be required to take tests or assessments set by the exam boards, we have decided not set dates for mock examinations until we have this information.

However, we can say that in order to help Year 11 and Year 13 students achieve as well as they possibly can we will:

- Ensure early completion of all topics in the syllabus to allow sufficient time for revision
- Prioritise high quality teaching and regular feedback for Year 11 and Year 13
- Ensure students are thoroughly prepared for any tests and assessments
- Make sure grades awarded are a true reflection of a student's knowledge, skills and understanding in a subject
- Ensure teachers receive high quality professional support and advice in making these difficult judgements

Our advice to Year 11 and Year 13 students to maximise their chances of success is:

- Attend every lesson, focus fully and complete every task set to a high standard
- Spend sufficient time on assessed pieces of work and always give it your best shot
- Act on feedback given by your teachers and ask for help when you need it
- Learn the work as you cover it in class and do not leave it to last minute revision

8. Prefect Application Process for Year 10

Before Christmas Year 10 Form Tutors nominated students who had shown that they were consistently conscientious, considerate and co-operative and who they felt would contribute effectively as a JMHS Prefect.

This month I carefully considered the 103 nominations and checked whether the students nominated met each of the criteria below:

1. Excellent punctuality and always attends school when they can.
2. Always wears the school uniform correctly and smartly.
3. Has an excellent behaviour record with less than 5 behaviour points for the Autumn Term.
4. Average grade on the latest progress check is 6.0 (very good) or higher.
5. There is at most one improvement needed grade on the progress check.
6. The student is kind and considerate of others and supportive of our school ethos.

71 of the 103 students nominated were judged to have met these challenging criteria. Students who do not yet meet the criteria have been given feedback from their Form Tutor or Year Leader and will have the opportunity to improve and demonstrate that they now meet the criteria before the end of the Spring Term and then apply at this time.

I will be leading a virtual Teams assembly for those who have met the criteria and are eligible to apply on **Tuesday 2 February**. This is to explain the role of prefects at JMHS and how they could contribute to achieving our school aims including 'building a community where we all support each other'. As well as outlining how to complete the

application form on which applicants should demonstrate that they are conscientious, considerate and co-operative and summarise what they hope to contribute to JMHS. Form tutors can support students in completing their application form if help is needed. The deadline for submitting prefect application forms is Friday 12 February.

I will review all of the applications and let applicants know by the beginning of March if they are to be appointed as a JMHS Prefect. All prefects will have the opportunity to order the JMHS black prefect sweatshirt and prefect badges ready to start their prefect roles at the start of the Summer Term.

9. Communications with students and parents/carers

We have initiated fortnightly Year Group newsletters to students summarising briefly and clearly key information they need to know and a copy will also be sent to parents and carers via ParentPay. My Headteacher's newsletter will be sent out on alternate weeks to the Year Group newsletters but I will of course contact you in between if the need arises. Our Year Leaders and Student Support Assistants should be contacted if parents or students need support.

10. Events and key dates for the Spring Term

- Monday 25 January- Friday 12 February- Y8 Option interviews
- 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
- Friday 12 February 2021: Deadline for prefect applications
- 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 give my thanks to all those that filled in the questionnaire about our online lessons. I have personally read every response and your feedback has been invaluable in helping us plan improvements.

With my very best wishes



Andrew Evans
Headteacher