



5 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

It seems hard to believe that we are now in February and have been Learning@home for four weeks but I am sure that you will all agree that the holiday next week is very much needed by everyone. I apologise for the length of this communication but I also know that you will be keen to be updated and there is always so much to share.

THS Learning@Home

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to the review of our online learning, which closed on Tuesday (summary attached). We really appreciated all the positive comments and thanks to staff, which I have shared with them. As you know, our current learning offer was intended for two weeks, which turned into four and will now continue after the February break. This offer was based on the following – equity, digital guidelines, parental satisfaction from our last lockdown and staff capacity. Changes over the last couple of weeks have included - the provision of digital devices for all our S1/2 families without access to address the equity issue, updated guidance for online learning and a school review with all stakeholders. Together these have allowed us to refine our offer. What our review has highlighted is how much young people in S1/2 wish to engage in live lessons and how much pressure our S3-6 are under, with many requesting more time to complete their tasks. This has allowed us to create more balance for everyone and from 22 February we will be working a 50% live lesson model for the majority of subjects. At the same time we will be working within the guidelines of 20 hours a week for young people in S1 - 3 and 25 hours a week for young people in S4 – 6. More detail regarding this will follow after the holidays but we believe that this new model will better meet the needs of all our learners and their families. As always, please do get in touch with feedback so that we can continue to refine and improve what we do.

Digital Strategy and Devices

We are really proud of our 1:1 iPad provision for S3 – 6 which we fund as a school and which has led to us being both a Digital School Scotland and Apple Distinguished School. However, we have been focusing during lockdown on ensuring that our young people in S1 and S2 have access to devices. With the support of CEC and SCVO we have ensured that all young people without access have been supported with an iPad and/or WIFI. We are also now delighted to let you know that two local businesses have come on board to support us with this as follows:

- Pax & Iris Ltd – Pamela Scott (CEO & founder and also on the board of Big Hearts) – 50 iPads
- EnergySys Ltd – a global energy software company with roots in Edinburgh – 40 iPads & a STEM partnership with the school.

We cannot thank Pamela and EnergySys enough for their support in helping us towards our aim of being a fully 1:1 school, ensuring that every young person has a device.



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Phased return to school

You will be aware that the Scottish Government announced on Tuesday that there is to be a phased return to school from 22 February to include very limited numbers of students in S4-6 to complete in-school practical work that is essential for completing national qualifications. We have not yet received the guidance to ensure that this is in place but anticipate that we will receive this next week. We will be in touch when we return with all young people who fall into this category to let them know the detail regarding this.

Creative Writing

We are delighted to share the first anthology of creative writing from our S1 creative writing group, Tyne 2 Write. Mr Jamie Thom takes this group of S1 students twice a week and their hugely impressive anthology can be found on our website. It's not too late to join if your child feels inspired!

Health and Wellbeing

This week saw us supporting Place2Be's Children's Mental Health Week. It's a big thank you to our Health and Wellbeing Group as well as Lucy Maxwell from Place2Be for their support and resources for both students and staff.

Assemblies

Please, can you let your child know that there will be assemblies with me from 8.30am – 8.40am during the first week back as follows:

- S1 – Tuesday 16
- S2 – Wednesday 17
- S3 – Thursday 18
- S4-6 – Friday 19

This will be an opportunity for me to welcome them back and share news and updates.

So, lastly, I really do hope that you and your family have a well-earned break. I do not think we could have realised just how much this lockdown would impact on our young people, so I hope that the opportunity to sleep, exercise, catch up with friends online and maybe even play and find some joy in their days is possible for them all.

For now, do take care, stay connected, and most importantly, stay safe.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Kinnear

Head Teacher