



# St Benedict's College

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6<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

Further to my communication of 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021, I want to update you on my understanding of the current position for schools, in Northern Ireland.

## **Remote Learning**

The key point for all of us is that EA have declared that effective from Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January “all post primary schools are required to provide remote learning at home to their pupils rather than face to face teaching in school, until the half term break in the middle of February.”

As I shared previously our students will be expected to engage with their teachers and their learning via Google Classroom. All students are familiar with this platform and should be able to login to Google, to go to Google Classroom and to check out the various courses that have been placed there by their teachers. If logging on is an issue for anyone please refer to the guidance that is available on the school website – <https://www.stbenedictscollege.co.uk>, under the online learning tab, or email us at: [info@stbenedicts.randalstown.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stbenedicts.randalstown.ni.sch.uk)

The Education Minister is set to announce that GCSE exams scheduled for next week will be cancelled as will all GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations this year. Alternative awarding arrangements have not been announced. While we await further direction from DE and CCEA, GCSE students, in both Years 11 and 12, must continue with their learning through Google Classroom. Those students receiving external grades will need to be particularly conscientious in engaging with their online learning and in submitting assessments to their teachers. It is likely that work completed online in the next few weeks/months will have to be used to determine centre assessed grades.

Please note, Remote Learning for all begins tomorrow, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## **Remote Learning and Teaching Policy**

As we move in to this extended period of Remote Learning I would ask you to review our Draft Remote Learning and Teaching Policy which is available on the website. It sets out our thoughts on pupil, parent and teacher's roles and responsibilities in relation to Remote Learning. If you have any comments on it, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## **Expectations of Students in relation to Remote Learning**

Experience tells us that students require clear direction to ensure successful engagement in online learning so let me make our expectations of all clear.

All students in Years 8 – 12 should:

- Establish a daily routine.
- Log on to Google Classroom on a daily basis.

- Check into each classroom on their timetable to see what work their subject teacher has set for the week.
- Use the timetable on the website to plan when they will complete the work set by their subject teachers (there are suggested blocks of time for pupils to focus on each of their subjects).
- Establish a routine for their learning which works for them and the family to include breaks and time away from the screen – in particular all students should allow time for exercise.
- Engage in all tasks set to the best of their ability – where there is an issue or they are unsure, consider the support resources available to them. These may include taking time to re-read/re-watch/re-listen to the instructions; contact with peers who are undertaking the same task; advice from a parent/guardian; reference to the Parent/Student Classroom Guide to Google Classroom for technical support; request for further clarification or information from the teacher.
- Recognise that some tasks will feel very challenging when they are working independently and that is okay. They should not panic if it does not come easily and they don't understand. They should keep at it and ask for help if they need it.
- Recognise that teacher feedback will often include actions for improvement that need to be followed up on. They should not feel this is personal or respond defensively but recognise that this is a vital part of how we all learn and an important function of any teacher's role.
- Seek support if they are feeling overwhelmed – speak to an adult or make contact with their teacher through Google Classroom.
- Stay connected to friends/peers to support their own mental health and wellbeing.

### **“Supervised Learning” for Children of Key Workers and Vulnerable Children**

While we are moving to Remote Learning we remain committed to providing “supervised learning” for the children of Key Workers and for Vulnerable Children. EA stipulates that “vulnerable children and children of key workers should have access to schools for supervised learning. Vulnerable children include amongst others all statemented children. The Department’s Policy is that only one parent needs to be a key worker for a pupil to be allowed to attend school”

For your convenience I have included DE definitions of Vulnerable Children and Key Workers:

#### **Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)**

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan>)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is ‘on-the-edge’ of receiving support from children’s social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.

- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

### **Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (Jan 21)**

(Please note that if one parent meets this definition then the child can attend school)

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

If your child falls in to any of these categories and particularly if they have a statement of educational need, I would encourage you to consider availing of the supervised learning provision on offer, on either a part time or full time basis. Statemented children's LSAs can be available on site to support them with their learning.

Please note supervised learning is not face to face teaching and is no alternative to it. It will be facilitated by teaching and support staff on a rotational basis and will be available from 9.00am - 3.25pm daily. It has to be prearranged and student's attendance has to be risk assessed. Naturally all health and safety protocols will be adhered to by staff and students involved.

Several parents have already been in touch to make arrangements for next week. Should you wish to avail of the provision being offered please email me at [cmcateer744@c2kni.net](mailto:cmcateer744@c2kni.net) to let me know your specific requirements. (Child/Children to attend, Day(s) to attend and Times for drop off and collection) All requests for next week must be with me by Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January at noon to allow arrangements to be put in place.

Clearly the COVID situation is developing on a daily basis, plans shared with you on Monday are largely null and void today. I will continue to try to communicate with you as swiftly as I can, but I

would encourage you to regularly review the school website and Facebook/Twitter accounts as they are our main modes of communication.

As ever I thank you for your ongoing support and encourage you to contact me, if myself or a member of the team, can do anything to support you and your family at this time.

Yours sincerely

Catriona Mc Ateer

(Principal)