

21 January 2021



Dear parents and carers

As we come to the end of our first fortnight of teaching online, I am writing with a few updates and reminders.

Online learning

Firstly I would like to thank all of you for your support in with home learning and say a big 'well done' to the vast majority of our students, who are engaging brilliantly with their online lessons. I know that supporting home learning whilst managing your own work and the needs of the rest of the family can be a huge challenge; I am grateful for all you are doing to ensure students are working hard and that they are dressed (appropriately) and ready for registration at 8.30 am every day. It's been lovely to receive so much positive feedback from our families about the remote teaching, too.

We are conscious of the increase in screen time that this way of working creates. In response, we are trying to reduce the use of screen-based homework and encouraging teachers to finish lessons a few minutes early to allow for extra short breaks. Next Friday, we are planning a screen free afternoon and you will receive information about this soon. We continue to review the situation and I will keep you abreast of any further measures we put in place.

Covid-19

Although the majority of our students are learning from home at the moment, the college retains responsibility for monitoring cases. If your child is at home but tests positive for Covid-19, please still keep us informed via the testresult@thespirescollege.com email address. If your child is attending the on-site provision, **you must not send them into college if they or any member of your household, support bubble or childcare bubble has any Covid-19 symptoms.** You also must inform us of any positive cases in your household. As the national lockdown continues and the vaccination programme gets under way, we hope to see cases of Covid-10 reducing in Torbay. However it is essential that everyone continues to stick to the guidance about minimising social contacts, keeping distance from others, wearing face coverings, hand hygiene and good ventilation.

Testing

Government guidance for using Lateral Flow Device testing with students continues to change regularly. We have taken the decision to pause our planned testing provision for students until there is greater clarity from the DfE. I will let you know in due course what our provision will look like in the longer term. Please note that you do not need to write to me to explain the reasons you do not wish your child to take part in any testing regime. Firstly, we are not currently testing students and secondly, I have always stated that any testing of children would be based on parental consent. We will write with more detail about this once we are satisfied with the government position.

Examinations

Ofqual are now consulting on their plans for what will replace examinations for Years 11 and 13 this summer. What is clear is that schools will not be asked to simply submit a grade this year; students will have to sit some form of controlled assessment or examination. It is imperative that students in those examination year groups continue to study and revise as they were before Christmas because they **will** sit a formal assessment for each qualification.

I am trying not to bombard you with letters but will write again as and when things change. In the meantime, please do get in touch if you are uncertain about any of the above.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Newton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alex Newton
Principal