

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions were raised at the Parent Forum on 4th November 2020.

Canteen

Why have the food options in the canteen been limited?

To adhere to government social distancing advice, the school have had to limit the access of student numbers to the canteen. This has meant that food sales have been lower. The canteen provider, Olive, have had to adjust their food offer to ensure that the options available are as fresh as possible but also meet the lower demand. The service is also impacted by short-notice isolation of year groups who have been sent home due to Covid-19. However, since half term the food options have been widened and have now returned to pre-Covid levels. The caterers are keen to hear from students who are missing a particular food choice, and they can email our operations manager, Sarah Edwards at sarah.edwards@unityschoolstrust.co.uk, if they have any requests or suggestions.

Could single use plastics (cutlery etc) be replaced with more recyclable versions?

Normally the school and caterer are committed to using environmentally sustainable solutions for both food and disposables. However, during the current emergency it is not possible due to cost constraints. We will resume the use of recyclable options as soon as it is operationally possible to do so.

Extra Curricular Activities

When will extra curricular activities be restarted?

Extra-curricular activities are governed by sporting authorities, external to the school and we are therefore subject to their rules and current COVID restrictions. This has meant that many of the usual activities have not been permissible. Working with external bodies the school are striving to get extra curricular activities running again as soon as possible. Additionally, Homework clubs (for each year group due to COVID) are high on the priority list to restart when a workable and safe procedure is identified.

Exams

What is happening with internal exams?

Currently the full schedule of internal exams is expected to run but this is obviously contingent on external factors:

- **Y11 Entrance Exams:**

Following the usual process, these start in November and continue through to December. A Results Day is held in January – this will still go ahead in some format – where students receive their results on one sheet.

Parents and students have been kept informed about this via ParentMail, student email and assemblies by R Dunn, R Onions (Progress Lead) and K Eggleton (Exams Manager).

- **Y7-Y10 Exams:**

These take place in the summer term and we plan on delivering these if circumstances permit.

- **External Exams:**

The national summer 2021 exam schedule has been pushed back by three weeks, and there have been changes to some exams as a result. Other than that we have no further update from the DfE or Ofqual, but will advise parents and students when we do. This includes the Y10 Statistics GCSE.

If public exams are cancelled, we will communicate with parents and students accordingly, as we did as soon as the 2020 exams were cancelled. This included sending out the Ofqual Guidance for Parents, Students and Teachers and directing people to specific information and helplines. We followed the guidance given to us by Ofqual, which included not basing any grade information on work completed after schools closed on 20th March in order to limit any unfair advantage. We did, however, advise students to continue with the work set for them in order to remain prepared for the next stage eg college.

- **Information regarding Foundation/Higher Tiers**

In some subjects, there are still two tiers at exam level, Foundation and Higher, and entry to these is decided by the teacher and Head of Faculty based on academic evidence.

- **BTEC Subjects**

BTECs and OCRs are graded differently to GCSEs and there is no change to how these have been reported, therefore there is no need for a conversion key. They still follow the fine-grading (1/2/3) to show progress within grades.

Parents' Evenings

We will be using a new virtual online system, which is being introduced: sessions will be limited to 5 minutes (as per the 'in person' evenings that usually run). R Dunn sent a ParentMail to this effect, together with the Autumn report dates, and more details will follow.

Home Learning (Homework)

Some students felt they had experienced high levels of home learning, both during lockdown/self-isolation and more generally. How does TMCS ensure that the level of home learning set is manageable?

- Given the nature of lockdown earlier this year, teachers thought carefully about all distance learning they set for students to complete at home. Teachers focused their planning and activities set for students around key activities only. These activities could potentially take longer than planned without the structure of the normal school day, so teachers often gave timescales of how long tasks should take. To increase structure and manage student workload, from September 2020 should students or a bubble be sent home then activities are set for them by teachers on the timetabled day of each lesson. This will enable students, supported by parents/carers, to plan their day and workload accordingly. Class teachers and Progress Leads have always been available to provide additional support and guidance if it is required.
- Home learning is set in line with the timetables and expectations outlined on our website: <http://www.magnacarta.surrey.sch.uk/home-learning/> These measures are designed to help students manage their workload and develop their study skills so that they can enjoy success at the end of Year 11 and beyond. Students are encouraged to seek support with home learning, whether by speaking to their class teacher(s), through email and after September 2020 through MS Teams. If parents/carers would like to raise any issues or concerns about home learning they can email the Progress Lead for their child's year group.
- All home learning, or distance learning should students or a bubble be sent home, is outlined on SIMS Homework only. This will provide an overview of everything required from students and it is visible to students and parents/carers. Activities are then usually be found on MS Teams for students to complete and seek support from their peers or class teacher as required; there are also additional support resources on there if needed. The only exception to this is Maths, where work is set weekly on MyMaths throughout Years 7-11. In summary there is only one place where all activities for students can be found, SIMS Homework, but teachers will of course utilise a wide range of others to help support students as thoroughly as possible in their home learning.

What is the provision for remote learning should there be another national lockdown/ requirement to self isolate?

We have worked hard to put in place new procedures to enable remote learning. The central provision for this is via the Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) application.

- Students timetable will be adhered to as if they were in a normal school day.
- The teacher for each session will be available on MS Teams during the set time on the timetable.
- They will post work onto MS Teams and be available to answer questions on a live chat function. Questions can be asked individually or as a group.
- Teachers will use “voice over” powerpoints where appropriate

The new procedures offer the following benefits

- Real time contact and interactivity with your teacher
- Students are able to keep to the discipline of their timetable

Please find a link to a presentation [HERE](#) that details what a typical MS Teams lesson looks like.

Why didn't you have this available during the first lockdown?

The school did not have MS Teams up and running as a platform and it has taken time to set it up and train staff and students.

What if our household does not have enough laptops/ipads?

Although the teacher will be available during the lesson itself the chat and the work that is posted will remain live outside of the lesson so students who need to log on at a different time are able to do so.

If you are particularly struggling with access to the internet /laptops etc then please email head@magnacarta.surrey.sch.uk

How does remote learning work if you are self-isolating as an individual or bubble (and the rest of the year is in school).

Work will be loaded on to Teams as per full lockdown. There maybe a short delay of 24-48 hours whilst work is translated from the class environment to MS Teams. Your teachers will be available via the info@ or MS Teams chat functions.

Why aren't you doing "online lessons"?

Online lessons can be defined a number of different ways however the most common definition is a live stream via a webcam /or video of a teacher standing at the front of a class delivering a lesson. There are significant privacy and storage issues with this approach. Due to smartphone recording availability it is impossible to control recording of these sessions and the content can then potentially be posted on other social media platforms. Once it appears there it is almost impossible to take down. Feedback from other schools in the area has been that they too have moved away from this approach as it has not been found to be effective. Webcam recordings are also notoriously difficult from a sound perspective. We believe the new approach as outlined above using MS Teams is a more productive and protected mechanisms for delivering remote learning.

Should parents/carers wish to extend their child further, or add an extra layer of support in addition to what is provided by class teachers, then resources such as BBC Bitesize and Oak Academy could be used.

During lockdown our young adults lost interest in their school work as they didn't feel it was being acknowledged or marked. How do you plan to rectify this in case we are in a similar situation?

TMCS' Assessment and Feedback Policy (found here: <http://www.magnacarta.surrey.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Assessment-and-Feedback-Policy-19-20.pdf>) was followed throughout lockdown earlier this year. This meant that class teachers gave actionable feedback on key assessments only at least once per half term, and that weekly tasks that would have normally been completed in lessons would not usually receive feedback. Achievement Points were used instead to acknowledge the fantastic efforts of students each week as and when appropriate. This approach will continue whether a student is studying in school or at home to ensure that teacher feedback is used to support progress and that it is actioned by students.

How can we ensure our young adults have more contact with their form tutors/teachers if we are in another remote learning situation?

We have heard the request for more contact with teachers and will consider mechanisms to make this happen more reliably moving forward.

Online Social Media Bullying

We are fully aware of the video incident that was widely reported from the start of this term. As with all incidents we have approached this with a policy of sanction and education. We collaborate fully with the Police and they make us aware of any incidents that they come across.