



De La Salle
School

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15th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Parental Update - 15th January 2021

Now we are well in to the term, I hope families are now finding a rhythm and routine for home education. We have been working hard with staff to ensure a consistent mix of live lessons, pre-recorded sessions and online work.

Numbers in-school are considerably higher than they were during last lockdown (averaging around 75 students compared to around 10 in the summer). Our team of teaching assistants are able to manage this, however the students are in large bubbles which invariably means a higher level of mixing with other families and therefore risk of infection. **So again I would urge key worker families to only send their child in for a place at school if it is absolutely necessary.**

1. Online Lessons – behaviour

The vast majority of students are working very well in their online lessons. However, as students become more comfortable with the technology the temptation might arise to push the boundaries: for example making inappropriate comments in the chat section, muting or unmuting others, creating their own break out rooms etc.

Obviously our staff will deal with such issues but I mention this as, gone are the good old 'Grange Hill' days of throwing something at your mate when the teacher isn't looking (though I realise none of us ever did that as children!), with everything being online, everyone leaves a digital footprint and our tech team can easily identify students who do misuse the technology. Any students who do this will have their access reduced or possible removed.

2. Online Parents' Evenings

For this year, we have started running our online parents' evenings via video calls and these are generally working well. Can I just ask you to be aware of a couple of common issues that we are seeing:

- a. Please make sure you are using the latest version of your web browser. The browsers which will currently support the parents' evening software are Chrome, Firefox, Edge and Safari. If you are not using the latest version of the browser, or if you are using a different browser, the video call may not work.
- b. Please make sure that you have connected your camera and microphone and that you have allowed the website to access these.
- c. Both appointment booking and the parents' evening video calls are accessed through delasalleschool.schoolcloud.co.uk – you do not need to use Teams, ParentMail or any other school systems.

You can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to your care.

We will be providing some user guides for reference on our main school website, these guides are also sent out to you via ParentMail before each parents' evening.

3. Year 8 Parent Evening

Yesterday the company providing the service for the online parental meetings had a technical issue partway through our Year 8 Parents Evening. This was a national problem affecting all the schools using the system. We apologise for any disruption this caused. We have asked staff to contact parents before next Friday by email or, if not possible, by phone, where appointments were interrupted.

4. Social Media – Issues

One of the big issues we faced after the last lockdown was picking up the pieces in school of disputes and arguments that had taken place outside of school over lockdown on social media. With students no longer coming into face to face contact with each other their main form of communication is via social media. So it is more important than ever that parents are vigilant as to how their child uses social media

5. Welfare Calls

We have now started to make our weekly welfare calls. Every student will receive a short call from a member of staff to look at:

- How they are coping?
- How their online learning is going?
- If they need any additional support?

Most of these calls will be audio calls over TEAMS to the students. Though of course students can take these calls on a laptop, computer (with mic) or tablet, **it would be very helpful if all students could download the TEAMS app (for free) on their mobile phones.** These calls will take place weekly.

6. Testing

Our testing centre is now fully operational and has been passed by the LA inspection team. We will begin weekly testing of those students onsite (where consent has been given) from Monday. All results will be sent to the parental contact indicated on the consent forms.

7. Lockdown Toolkit

I have attached a lockdown toolkit from the Anna Freud Centre. It contains a variety of information, ideas and support for individuals and families during lockdown.

The current crisis is challenging for us all and, on reflection, it probably wasn't the easiest year to try Dry January, however the real rays of light can be seen in our collective response to the issues we are all facing. The kindness, professionalism, generosity and compassion from staff, students and parents has been very uplifting and provides us all with hope for the future. And January can't last that long, can it?

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Rannard
Headteacher