

Remote Learning: Details we know so far

Dear parents/carers,

Staff are very quickly preparing for the transition to flexible and remote learning following the government direction that “**all students who can learn at home must learn from home**”. This is a very big change for staff, students and parents, and we will do our best to keep up communication and support student learning. While a number of details about how this will work are still being refined, we can share some of the following details so far.

WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT WEEK

Teachers have already used the pupil-free period before the holidays to plan the learning tasks for next week. Initially – while we get set up with online options and understand student needs - lessons will be made available on our school website www.bellbridgeps.vic.edu.au as follows:

- A weekly learning task for each specialist area will be provided for grades that would usually have it this semester, e.g. Grade 3-6 will have a STEM task provided weekly.
- A daily learning task will be provided for each year level for Reading, Writing, Maths and Inquiry/Other.
- Play-based activities in the home and physical activity are also considered part of daily learning.

Classroom teachers will be making every effort to make phone contact on Tuesday, if not the days following. Parent responses to the Compass survey under “Insights” will help.

HOW LONG SHOULD BE SPENT ON SCHOOLWORK EACH DAY?

Guidelines from the Department of Education suggest a daily minimum of:

Grade P-2 students = Approx. 2.0-2.5 hours daily (including 30-45 minutes of play-based learning and physical activity)

Grade 3-6 students = Approx. 3.0-3.5 hours daily (including 30 minutes of physical activity)

The usual timetable will not apply. Parents and older siblings should support the attempt of learning tasks whenever possible, as much as is manageable.

Break times will be 10:30-11:00am and 1:00-1:40pm for EVERYBODY working remotely – students and staff. This does not mean that everyone will be actively doing schoolwork at all other times though.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

Teachers are giving careful thought to the basic items that would typically be at home. Where a lesson requires certain materials, teachers will often make suggestions for alternative or varied tasks. If any task is too difficult to attempt or complete, simply let the teacher know via email. A lot of student work will not be assessed, but teachers will select particular items/methods to make sure there is some sort of ongoing assessment of student learning. As we get better at this new mode of learning, teachers will use various ways to ask for work, e.g. a piece of writing could be handwritten (then photographed) or typed and then emailed. We will sort out the best ways that work, and communicate along the way.

At least to start with, learning tasks will be the same across year levels, so all Grade 2 students will have a learning task for Reading, Writing, etc. and all Grade 6 students will have the same tasks. Students from different year levels are able to work in whatever way works best for the household – together at the kitchen table, separated in different areas, or taking turns to get some work done.

Children should not be needing to sit with a device all day. Teachers will not be sitting at a computer for the school day trying to mimic the classroom environment.

Online learning means that we can use online ways to provide details about learning tasks, answer questions, provide feedback as much as possible, and offer alternative tasks for students who need them.

We know that some children will be ready to excel with lots of support, and that others will just want to play and may not want to come to the computer or desk or kitchen table.

We absolutely understand that many parents/carers will be trying to work from home for their own jobs, or will feel unsure about how to support learning from home. We do not expect parents to replace the teachers. We just want everyone to do the best they can manage in this challenging time.

We have many students with individual needs. Teachers and Education Support staff will make every effort to establish the best way each child can be supported. Teachers and Education Support staff will give careful consideration to existing ILPs (Individual Learning Plans) for students who have them, and work towards appropriate support accordingly. Please be patient with this process.

Students learning at home are not required to wear school uniform, but may if they wish. (We're sure that some students will be wondering.) 😊

WHAT MATERIALS WILL BE NEEDED?

Basic stationery items will be needed, such as pens, pencils, or textas – and paper or exercise books. There is no requirement to have a special type of book or lined or unlined paper. Do the best with what's on hand, if possible. The school is not able to facilitate the collection of student books and pencil cases in a way that safely meets physical distancing requirements while there are skeleton staff on-site. If parents have concerns about inadequate basic items available at home, please communicate this to the teacher during phone/email contact next week.

STUDENT ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

One device shared between a number of children in the same family should suffice in most circumstances.

Once we have a better understanding of the technology needs of students, we will gather together a number of P-3 15-inch laptops to loan to families. The intention is to ensure that each family has at least one connected device. We will not necessarily be loaning one laptop per child.

Students in Grade 4-6 who pay for the 1:1 netbook program should already have the 1:1 netbook at home. This can be shared with siblings.

Parents of Grade 4-6 students who wish to pay for Term 2 netbook use are able to come to the school office on Wednesday 15th April between 9am-12pm to pay and collect.

Any other families in Grades P-6 who need to borrow a laptop will be able to arrange a loan of a 15-inch laptop from the Prep-Grade 3 classroom supplies. It will take time to make arrangements to support technology. This won't all happen in Week 1, but parents should be reassured that it's okay and children are expected to only do what they can manage. Survey results and phone contact will help us to know who needs what, and we will advise parents of the best way to collect a laptop as soon as we have them ready. This may not be in the first week of school. Please be patient. We also await further details about the technology support from DET.

AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OR TWO – MICROSOFT TEAMS

We know that it's important for students to see and hear their teacher and classmates. Microsoft Teams will be something we work towards, where students can be assigned tasks online, and video calls/conferencing can occur. This software appears to work well on various devices. Many students will need a parent to assist with typing any questions or helping connect to a video meeting with the teacher and class. At this stage, we are working towards the use of Microsoft Teams – but not straight away. Staff have already done a fabulous job using Teams to communicate and collaborate while working from home in the final days of Term 1. We will not be having students active on Microsoft Teams in Week 1, and probably not even for Week 2. Microsoft Education is rapidly working with educators and the Department of Education to get the settings right for Victorian schools. Microsoft Teams software isn't quite ready for us to use with students, and our staff will receive more training before we engage with students in this platform. Students will be given login details and instructions when we're ready.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE TEACHER

- Video calls/conferencing will be scheduled in a way that provides students with a chance to see and hear each other and their teacher for a short time – if they wish, but in a staggered way to ensure that a device (such as a laptop, phone or iPad) can be shared between children of various ages, e.g. classes from one year level might be actively communicating video online chat/video from 8:30-9:00, then a different year level from 9:00-9:30, etc. Parents will be responsible for determining if the student participates and if the student should be actively monitored.
- Parents will be able to email their child's teacher via Compass. We will advise parents as soon as Compass has activated this feature following our recent instruction to them.
- Parents will be able to use email to request a phone call from their child's teacher. It will be great for some students to be given a turn to speak, although some may be a bit phone-shy, which is fine.

WEBSITES USED AT BELLBRIDGE

There have been some updates to help students here:

<http://www.bellbridgeps.vic.edu.au/websites.html>

Worth a quick look to see what's there, as some sites are already available for use.

DET LEARNING FROM HOME INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

There is a lot of further information for families here:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/learning/Pages/home-learning.aspx>

DO THE BEST YOU CAN

The message to our teachers, students and families is that we are all learning new things and "you can only do what you can do". The most important thing is that no one in our school community feels a sense of urgency to reach "remote learning perfection" straight away. We know that everyone – staff, students and parents – will all be doing the best they can under these difficult circumstances. The main thing is that we keep safe and healthy, and ensure that every child goes to bed at night feeling like they stayed connected with school and they learned something that matters.