



Dear Parents,

Thank you for your encouragement and support in what has been an extraordinary term. Staff, students and parents have all worked positively and cooperatively to transition to remote learning. I appreciate the many words of encouragement to our teachers, who have invested countless extra hours to try and create meaningful and engaging lessons. On a normal school day teachers have a lot of practical, hands-on materials they can easily integrate into classroom learning to cater to a range of students. These materials can't be used when students are at home and so our teachers have invested a lot of time researching and developing stimulating alternatives.

### **We are concerned for you**

While it is important to celebrate our successes, I have no doubt that students learning from home can be hard on families. I also understand that, despite the very best efforts of our teachers, some students have struggled with the volume and complexity of the learning tasks they have been given over the last few weeks. Our teachers are deeply concerned for every student and do not want anyone to fall behind or become overwhelmed. To try and prevent this from happening teachers have been seeking evidence of learning from students. Our learning support team have been working hard to try and support particular students in need. If your son or daughter needs additional support or guidance, please read the relevant frequently asked questions on our [COVID-19 website page](#).

The last month or so has been emotionally demanding for almost everyone in Australian society. Over the autumn holidays I hope that our students, staff and parents will have the opportunity to pause, reflect, pray and come to terms with the effects of the coronavirus on their lives and consider ways of facing the future positively despite the uncertainty. Appreciating the importance of the need for rest these holidays, and in recognition of those students who may be struggling with the demands of remote learning, we will be starting Term 2 a little more gradually.

### **Looking towards Term 2**

**Monday 27/4** will be a day for students to go over work they completed last term and catch up on work they may have missed. We won't be operating according to our published approach to remote learning (junior and secondary). Rather, I would appreciate parents guiding their children to go over their notes and other lesson materials from Term 1. I appreciate that this is more feasible for some age groups than others. It would be helpful if parents could keep their children at home on Monday; however, supervision will be provided for students who need to come to school.

From Tuesday, based on government advice provided to the public, I anticipate that the large majority of our students will continue to learn at home in much the same way that they did in the last few weeks of Term 1. While I can't be sure, I



think it is more likely than not that this will continue for most, if not all, of Term 2. When government advice on school attendance changes I will be in touch with parents as soon as I can to advise them of new arrangements.

On **Tuesday 28/4** teachers will leave work on the Junior School Hub, or the applicable Secondary School Google Classroom, for their students to go on with during the day. Students can complete their assigned work at their own pace rather than according to the structured approach the school introduced in the last couple of weeks of Term 1. Year 2 to 6 teachers will use Zoom to connect with their students on Tuesday morning.

During these 2 days please encourage your children to write down content and concepts covered during Term 1 which they struggled to understand. For our youngest students, it would be helpful for their parents to note down any particular areas where their son or daughter may be struggling.

When the remote learning [program](#) recommences on **Wednesday 29/4**, teachers will continue to invest time understanding, and then trying to meet, identified student need. This will take a considerable amount of time given the limitations of remote learning. Our teachers will do their best to help as many students as effectively and quickly as they reasonably can.

Recognising the value of providing time for students to catch up on and consolidate their learning, we intend to set aside a day each fortnight for this purpose for as long as remote learning continues. Teachers will construct learning on that day around consolidating learning that has occurred over the previous fortnight rather than proceeding with new course material.

**Assessing and reporting** is very important to help students learn, improve and achieve. After launching our theme for 2020 *Successful learning: how can data help?*, the move to remote learning has challenged our school to reconsider how we can:

- validly assess student work
- generate meaningful data on student progress
- provide feedback to students and parents
- show parents how their children have performed academically in comparison to other students in their cohort i.e. the A to E grading scale.

Mr Stonestreet has already written to Year 12 students and parents explaining how we will approach their assessment tasks and he intends to write to Year 11 parents. For the other year groups some methods of assessing student work, such as in class tests, will be very difficult to conduct fairly and accurately. Therefore, our teachers will be using a range of work samples students have produced this year to make a professional judgment about which grade from A to E best describes the academic performance of each student. I am confident that this approach will be fairer and more accurate than a limited number of high stakes



assessment tasks e.g. only using 2 major assignments to determine the A to E grade.

We will be sending half yearly reports to parents, although in light of the changed approach to assessment we will need to adjust the report formatting and presentation for at least some year groups. Appreciating these substantial changes to assessment and reporting, it is possible that we may need to send our Semester 1 reports to parents a few weeks later than we normally would.

### **Feedback on learning**

Remote learning and the necessary changes to assessment have also presented challenges as to how teachers provide feedback on student learning. Over the last couple of years we developed what I think is an excellent system of providing feedback on student work using SEQTA. Now that the overwhelming majority of our students are learning at home I need to give teachers the flexibility to provide feedback on student learning in a range of ways, not just through SEQTA. However, I am confident that our teachers will do all they reasonably can to provide feedback on academic work to students and parents in a way that is accessible and understandable.

### **Communicating with parents**

Given the current government restrictions I am not able to conduct parent teacher evenings for the foreseeable future; however, the school will coordinate these important events later in the year. The FAQs on the [coronavirus website page](#) provide guidance to parents on how they can contact their child's teacher(s) about their son or daughter's learning.

Earlier in the year I indicated that I would send parents our annual survey by the end of Term 1. Given the enormity of what has occurred over the last few weeks I have not been able to reconstruct a meaningful survey for parents. My sincere apologies. Parents are still very welcome to provide feedback and ask questions of concern to them at any time during the year.

The school office will be closed over the school holidays and we don't anticipate that many staff will be onsite. If you need to get in contact with the school please phone 02 8525 5111 or email [contact@shirechristian.nsw.edu.au](mailto:contact@shirechristian.nsw.edu.au)

### **Student dress and use of Zoom**

When students are learning from home, they are simply asked to dress modestly i.e. covered shoulders, high neckline. A T shirt or similar is fine providing whatever is printed on the garment is appropriate. Students are also asked to ensure that whatever is behind them and in view of the computer's camera in a Zoom meeting is not personal or private.

Students who come to school should wear the winter uniform as normal. The school appreciates that some students may not be able to acquire some winter



Shire  
Christian  
School

*a firm foundation*

uniform items. If this is the case, teachers will be happy to talk to these students about reasonable alternatives.

**And finally....**

I am very concerned for all of our parents and students who are struggling emotionally or financially at this particularly difficult period in world history. Many people in our school community are praying that the sick will be healed, the needy provided for and the downhearted will be comforted.

On behalf of Shire Christian School teachers and support staff I trust that the Lord will bless and keep you over the autumn holiday and we look forward to reconnecting with our much loved students in a few short weeks.

Kind regards,

Mr Brett Hartley  
Principal