



Tuesday 26th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are well. I hope you know that the mental and physical health and well-being of our students is our priority alongside ensuring a good and outstanding quality of education.

I want you to know that I understand the pressures and challenges that our students, staff and parents are feeling. We are all trying to manage our jobs, or in some cases lack of employment; juggle parenthood; teach or support education of children at home; some are dealing with bereavement of loved ones and people we know; as well as covid illness ourselves, and that is all on top of normal pressures, worries and anxieties that we have going on.

As a school we have been looking out for each other and I am really proud to belong to a close knit community where we care about each other. As a senior leadership team we have been concerned about the mental and physical well-being of staff and students, the amount of time we are expected to be in front of a screen and also being mindful of safeguarding our children's education.

We are writing to you regarding some upcoming changes to our online learning provision which we hope will alleviate some of the pressures and support positive mental and physical well-being. We have been thoroughly impressed with the dedication from Aylesford students to engage in their learning and attend their lessons. As you can imagine this is quite a change from attending school and being able to have contact with their friends each day.

During the first lockdown, when there was little known regarding online learning, we made the decision to ask all students to have cameras off during live learning sessions. We are now in a position where we feel it is in the best interest of staff and students to allow students to have their cameras on. We have based this decision on national research as well as looking at what the benefits this will bring to our students and our work.

By allowing students to have their camera on, teachers will be able to monitor engagement in lessons more closely, as well as their understanding and progress, and ensure that students are participating fully – something which is impossible to do when teaching to a screen of names! The cameras will also allow students to engage with their peers and improve wellbeing by having that contact. The expectation is that all students have their cameras on for each lesson when they are instructed to do so by the teacher and follow the code of conduct attached. We obviously understand that this could cause anxiety for some students and in this instance, we will only expect cameras to be switched on at the start and end of each lesson and then again if they are asked a question by a teacher.



Attendance to lessons

Students are expected to attend all lessons and parents should let the school know if a student is unable to attend lessons. Please continue to let us know if your child is ill.

We are aware that some students have previously chosen to log in to lessons to ensure they receive their attendance mark but then do not engage or participate in the lesson. By having cameras off it makes it impossible for the teacher to tell if students are engaged, therefore a student who chooses to have their camera off will only be marked present if there is evidence of participation in the lesson. This evidence will be in the form of answering questions, use of the chat function and/or submitting work to demonstrate that they were engaged in the lesson. Please encourage your child to work with the camera on to allow the teacher to support and encourage engagement.

Please ensure students do not share the links to lessons with people outside of Aylesford School – the lessons are for our students only.

Reduction of screen time

We are fully aware of the issues associated with large amounts of screen time and in order to support students and staff mental health and well-being we have taken the decision to reduce lesson time to 45 minutes to allow for a 15 minute comfort break in between each lesson. Lessons will start at normal time but will finish 15 minutes early. This reduces screen time by one hour and 15 minutes each day.

Aylesford's Character and Wellbeing Day

We have also decided to have one day per week dedicated to the wellbeing and character education of our students and staff. On this day, students and staff will not be expected to be online at all. The normal timetable will be suspended. In line with our “stay healthy, stay engaged, stay in touch” campaign, Aylesford students will participate in a character education day which will allow students to have a break from online learning one day a week but at the same time have an opportunity to try new activities and develop new skills. Attached is the menu of suggested activities and how they link to our character development. We would like students and staff to attempt 2-3 activities on these days. There will be awards for those who complete challenges.

The day will differ each week to ensure that the same lessons do not get missed. The students will log on to register in the morning and discuss their plans for the day with their mentor. There is a list of suggested activities attached and a rota below which takes us up until half term. There is an opportunity for students to submit evidence of their challenges to their mentors and plenty of rewards available to acknowledge the student's contributions. We look forward to seeing their endeavours and we will update our school Facebook page regularly with the submissions we receive.

The dates for these days are listed below.

Well Being and Character Education Day
Friday 29 th January
Thursday 4 th February
Wednesday 10 th February

Miss T Kelvie, NPQH
Head Teacher
Teapot Lane, Aylesford, Kent,
ME20 7JU
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RESPECT SELF-DISCIPLINE COURAGE
OPEN-MINDEDNESS MOTIVATION
RESILIENCE CONFIDENCE INTEGRITY
COMPASSION CURIOSITY

We will review this following any further announcements made regarding the return to school.

Yours sincerely,

Tanya Kelvie
Headteacher

Niamh Land
Senior Assistant Head
Teaching and Learning

David Wright
Senior Assistant Head
Character Education

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Head Teacher
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Schools of
CHARACTER



RESPECT SELF-DISCIPLINE **COURAGE**
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Live Lessons – Best Practice and Code of Conduct

This code of conduct outlines what is expected of students during live learning sessions. Much of this code is mirrored by the expectations of the students when they attend lessons in school.

Organisation

- Students will ensure they are registered for the sims student app to ensure they are able to access the zoom links successfully. Students should inform their mentor or progress leaders if there are any issues with the app.
- Students should ensure that they have the appropriate equipment to learn including pen, pencil, paper and any other special equipment needed, e.g. calculator.
- Students should be ready to learn by 8.30 each morning and access lessons on time.
- You must be dressed appropriately e.g. not in pyjamas

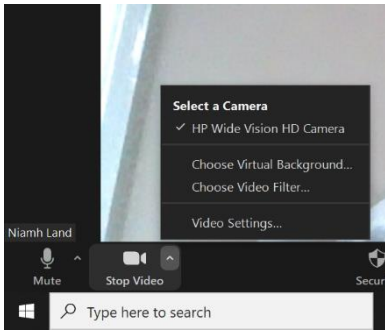
During the session

- Cameras to remain on to allow teachers to encourage active participation.
- A background to be used where possible otherwise students should sit in an appropriate location in the home e.g. Not lying in bed and please be mindful of what is visible behind you.
- There should not be any photographs visible in your background
- The environment is quiet and free from distraction where possible.
- All microphones are muted unless asked to unmute.
- You will use the “Raise Hand” function if you have a question.
- If the annotate function is enabled by the teacher, it will be used in an appropriate way as instructed.
- The chat function will only be used for lesson discussions.
- Students will not share screens unless specifically requested to do so
- Students will communicate with respect and courtesy at all times to both students and staff.

Data Protection

- You must not share links with anyone outside of your class – we understand that there may be times with technology fails and you may need to ask a friend to get you a link for a lesson. This should be a last resort and you should contact the class teacher by school email in the first instance to get any links.
- It is prohibited to take screen shots or record any part of the lesson.
- All work submitted should be done so via the sims app – please see the video on the school website explaining how to do this.

How to apply a virtual background to your screen

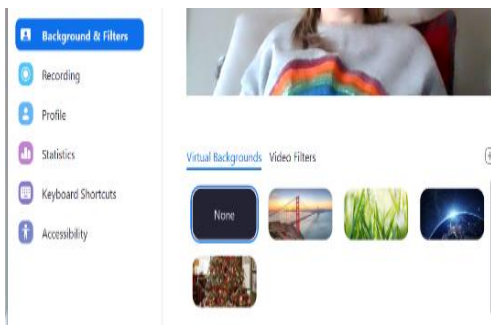


1. At the bottom of the Zoom Screen
Click on the arrow next to the video icon.

Some versions of Zoom do not have this function or may need updating.

2. Choose Virtual background

3. Choose the from the selection given (Ensure "I have a green screen is unticked)



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