

26 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Parent/carer guidelines for approaching home-based learning for secondary students

The following guidelines are offered with a view to establishing a peaceful and effective home-based learning environment. We live in a curious world at the moment and the intention is that these guidelines may be of assistance as you navigate what is new for us all.

1. Home-based learning should not diminish family harmony

One opportunity provided by this period of home-based learning is that parents, carers and children may develop even closer and stronger relationships. During this period, levels of empathy, understanding and communication should be enhanced. Family wellbeing and individual connection must not be sacrificed for the sake of completing learning tasks.

As parents/carers you will naturally assume the responsibility for ensuring that work set by teachers is progressed and completed. It is not expected that you would operate as a teacher's assistant, tutor or instructional leader. If you have expertise, then flaunt it but an equally appropriate response to a situation of confusion and frustration is to say, 'I do not know either. Let's just wait until the teacher answers your question.'

Parents/carers are encouraged to guide their children to direct questions and requests for clarification to teacher/s.

2. Prioritise personal development

The challenges that most students will experience are likely to be caused by their organisational skills, time management and motivation. Parents/carers will have an important opportunity to assist in the development of these skills. Any challenges experienced in regard to the home-based learning context can likely be managed as an extension of the existing expectations in your home about personal responsibility and organisation. It is strongly suggested that you deliberately come to an early understanding of your son's level of development in these characteristics in regard to his school work.

Establishing some clear goals for self-improvement can be especially valuable.

3. Attitude to subject

In the coming days/weeks you may notice that your son has differing attitudes to individual subjects. This is a reasonably natural occurrence. Your own experience at school may have been like this. It would be ideal to engage your son in a supportive conversation that explores the reasons for his attitude. The reasons may even lay in the past. Exploring ways to improve this attitude may prove to be extremely valuable in improving his engagement and academic progress. You may well encounter issues that should be shared with a subject teacher and/or the School's pastoral staff, especially the Assistant Heads of Senior School. Of course, this would be at your discretion.

4. Study space

Organising an appropriate study space, or spaces, will be of vital importance. The following ideas might prove useful:

- It is better that a study space is not in a bedroom. Ideally, there should be some separation to personal life and school life. The best advice on stress and wellbeing proposes that a bedroom should only be for sleeping and relaxing, and be technology free.
- Having more than one space to work does suit some boys. Sitting in one space for extended periods of time may exacerbate concentration and behaviour issues. It might be as simple as completing assignments on the dining room table and reading on the couch in the lounge, for instance.

THE HUTCHINS SCHOOL

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- Phones should be away from their workspace to avoid distractions.

5. Daily schedule

This will necessarily vary for the age, motivation and character of the student; however, the following are recommended:

- Please use the School lesson timetable as this is a familiar organisational feature that schedules learning and provides breaks. The teachers are also expecting to use this schedule to arrange online meetings.
- Establish a definite commencement time to the day and meet with your son at that time to organise the day. Questions of value are:
 - What is in your schedule today? (You may use the calendar in your son's Rory page)
 - What are you learning today?
 - What do you hope to achieve today?
 - What are your goals?
 - How will you spend your time?
 - Do you have the resources organised for your upcoming tasks?
 - What help do you need?
- Establish a definite closing time for formal study in the afternoon to meet with your son/s and lead a short reflection on the day. Questions of value at this time are:
 - What did you learn today?
 - What was proving difficult and what is your strategy to progress that?
 - Do you need to communicate with your teachers?
 - What do you need from me/us to complete today or prepare for tomorrow?
 - Are you OK?

6. Weekly schedule

Staff will be communicating the weekly expectations for each subject through the News feature of Rory at the commencement of each week. You can use this information to ensure that your son has incorporated all the tasks into their weekly schedule. Teachers will be connecting with students and holding them to account for their work.

It will also be important to schedule some physical exercise and recreational time into the daily and weekly schedule. Board games are an excellent way to change focus, build connection and refresh thinking.

7. Introverts and extroverts

Some students will miss the social experience of school. Others will be quite comfortable in their own space. It will be important to approach the level of structure and support with this perspective in mind. Directing students to connect with each other is valuable.

8. Understanding the Rory space

The best person to provide you with a tour of the Rory pages is your son. It is very unlikely that they are unaware of how the page operates. Should this be the case, you should contact the IT helpdesk at HelpDesk@hutchins.tas.edu.au and the School website for frequently asked questions.

I am hopeful that this information is helpful to you. Please feel free to contact me with questions should you wish to, by email at iain.belot@hutchins.tas.edu.au.

Yours sincerely



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