



Abbey Gate College

School Closure - Advice for Parents

10 Tips for Parents to cope with School Closure

We fully understand that switching to distance learning will be challenging for families. As parents, we know that you will face logistical challenges as well as educational ones – not least as your own work may be affected and there may be younger or older siblings in the house competing for bandwidth and laptops. Some students will thrive with distance learning, and require very little supervision or monitoring, but others may struggle with the less structured environment.

These **ten recommendations**, which we have adapted from the advice given by an international school who have already spent a few weeks in lockdown, are intended to help you think about what you can do to help your children make the most of a distance learning environment.

1

ESTABLISH ROUTINES AND EXPECTATIONS

- Abbey Gate College has already established very clear routines and expectations: in essence, it is a normal school day and the pupils will stay with their ordinary timetable as far as possible. It is important that pupils adopt the right habits from day one, and not several days after it becomes apparent they are struggling with the absence of routine.
- As parents, we need your help to ensure that the pupils are up, dressed, breakfasted and ready to begin their studies at 9:00am. Keep normal bedtime routines, including whatever rules you have at home regarding mobile phones. Don't let them stay up late and sleep in! Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study.



2

DEFINE A PHYSICAL SPACE FOR YOUR CHILD'S STUDY

- Your child will have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We recommend that you establish a permanent workspace where your children will learn most of the time. It should be a place that is quiet and free from distractions, and must have a strong wireless internet signal.
- Depending on your family situation, this may be a public space such as your own workplace; a family space, such as the dining room; or may simply be your child's bedroom. Whatever you choose, we suggest that you prop the door open, just like we prop all of our classroom doors open during lesson time. Above all, and where possible, it should be a space where a responsible adult is present to monitor the children's learning.

3

MONITOR COMMUNICATION FROM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS

Senior School

Teachers will mainly be communicating directly with pupils – this will take a number of forms but will mostly be via email and Firefly (VLE) messaging. It would be sensible to go through any communications each day so that you can discuss any concerns with your child. Work will also be set via the VLE, which is a good way of keeping an eye on what work your child is supposed to be doing. Teachers have been told to ensure work for the day is available by 9:00am – they will make contact directly with you if there is a problem, but if all is going well you may not hear much on a day-to-day basis. We also ask that pupils submit their work electronically via the VLE, whether this is by completing work on a Word document, or taking a picture on their phone. If you have a scanner at home – even better! We recognise pupils may struggle with the technical aspect so ask for your support in this matter.

Infant and Junior School

The teachers will make work available on the VLE by 9am and will post the tasks for the day along with links to the subject pages and websites. Depending on the age of the children, they may also set tasks that the children can then respond to and mark as complete. If a teacher has set a task, pupils also have the facility to send a message to the teacher. The teacher may also set up a forum so that all the pupils can share ideas. We have also set up email addresses to enable you to contact the teacher to return work or ask questions.

If you require IT support, you can email us at:

helpdesk@abbeygatecollege.co.uk

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BEGIN AND END EACH DAY WITH A CHECK-IN

Parents are encouraged to start and finish each school day with a simple check-in. In the morning, you might ask your child:

- What lessons do you have today?
- Do you have any tests or assessments?
- How will you spend your study periods?
- What resources do you require?
- What support do you need?

At the end of the day you might ask:

- Did you manage to complete all your tasks?
- Were there any technology issues?
- Have you submitted your work and marked it complete on the VLE?

These brief conversations matter. Checking in with them allows children to process the instructions they have received from their teachers. It helps them organise themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!), but they should do so nevertheless. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HELPING YOUR CHILDREN PROCESS AND “OWN” THEIR LEARNING

5

- In the course of a regular Abbey Gate College day, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for collaboration include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others.
- Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly check back and engage with their children about what they’re learning. However, it’s important that your child feels that they ‘own’ their work; don’t complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.



6

ESTABLISH TIMES FOR QUIET AND REFLECTION

- A huge challenge for families with more than one child will be how to manage their children’s competing needs. This will be harder when those children are different ages, follow a different timetable (e.g. Infant & Junior and Senior) and have different needs.
- There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction, and you may want to think about access to devices, priorities for wifi-bandwidth, and the role of reflection within the day. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones (no music necessary!) to block out distractions.

SENIOR SCHOOL TIMETABLE

Some pupils may find it easier to structure their day in a similar way to school. Completing their work during allotted times, and taking breaks as part of the same routine. Not forgetting the importance of Physical Education.

Session	Time
Period 1	8:45 – 9:50
Period 2	9:50 – 10:30
Break	10:30 – 10:50
Period 3	10:50 – 11:45
Period 4	11:45 – 12:40
Lunch	12:40 – 13:35
Period 5	13:35 – 14:35
Period 6	14:35 – 15:30
Tutor Time	15:30 – 15:50

EASTER HOLIDAYS

Thursday 2nd April – Monday 20th April

Pupils will not be explicitly set work during the holidays, but pupils can revise for their end of year exams by using the revision guides which are available via the PSHEE section of the VLE.

END OF YEAR EXAMS

Wednesday 22nd April – Friday 1st May

Pupil will be sitting their end of year exams remotely. They will be sent their papers on the day of their exam. We ask for your support to ensure it is sat in examination condition.

Year Group	Physical Education
7	Friday, Period 5 and 6
8	Tuesday, Period 5 and 6
9	Wednesday, Period 5 and 6
10	Thursday, Period 5 and 6
11	Wednesday, Period 5 and 6
L6	Monday, Period 5 and 6

INFANT & JUNIOR SCHOOL TIMETABLE

Session	Time
Lesson 1	9.00 – 9.40
Lesson 2	9.40 – 10.20
Break	10.20 – 10.40
Lesson 3	10.40 – 11.20
Lesson 4	11.20 – 12.00
Lunch	12.00 – 13.00
Lesson 5	13.00 – 13.40
Lesson 6	13.40 – 14.20
Lesson 7	14.20 – 15.00
End of day/Assembly	15.00 – 15.30

Year Group	Physical Education
Foundation	Wednesday and Friday afternoons
Infant 1 and Infant 2	Wednesday and Friday afternoon
Juniors	Monday afternoon and Friday morning



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ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE

- At Abbey Gate College our pupils enjoy a hugely active programme, and they will need frequent opportunities to let off steam. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. It may be that there are restrictions on access to public gyms, so it is worth thinking about how they can exercise safely without coming into contact with others. If they are following the pattern of the normal school day then there are obvious times built into the week for your children to exercise – you may need to be creative as to how you handle this.
- Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Walking the dog or cycling to the shops to pick up essential items is a good way of keeping them active.

8

REMAIN MINDFUL OF YOUR CHILD'S STRESS OR WORRY

- Inevitably this is going to mean a major upheaval to their normal routine, and none of the pupils, parents or staff have any experience of these arrangements. Without their friends, tutors, Heads of Year, teachers and support staff to support them, it is imperative that you, as parents, speak to your children to help them manage any worries, anxieties, and the full range of emotions they may experience.
- It is likely to be stressful for you as parents, too – especially if you are juggling your own work commitments. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and will need as much of a normal routine as you can provide.
- Do reach out to your child's Tutor, Head of Year or teacher if you would like any help or guidance in supporting your child.



9

MONITOR HOW MUCH TIME YOUR CHILD IS SPENDING ONLINE

- We do not want our students staring at computer screens for seven or eight hours a day. Teachers will aim to build in a variety of tasks, but it will require some trial and error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences.
- Given that the students will be using their laptops/desktops for the majority of lessons and many of their revision tasks, it is important that they are not dedicating their “down time” to “screen time.” It would be sensible to shut down all electronic devices (including mobile phones and games consoles) beyond a certain time each evening so that screen time is not affecting their sleep pattern.



10

KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SOCIAL, BUT SET RULES AROUND THEIR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- The initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends and see them in person when circumstances permit.
- Please also monitor your children’s social media use, especially during an extended school closure. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to comply with the school rules in their interactions with others. A student’s written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others, and any unkindness needs to be reported to your child’s Tutor or Head of Year.

Tracy Pollard
Headmistress

With thanks to the American School in Japan for some of the content of this guidance.

We will continue to update you via our normal systems of email and Clarion Call

Twitter: [@AbbeyGateColl](https://twitter.com/AbbeyGateColl)

Facebook: [@AbbeyGateCollege](https://www.facebook.com/AbbeyGateCollege)