

FAQs ABOUT MIS REMOTE LEARNING

(updated June 23, 2020)

The COVID-19 situation has prompted all schools to move away from brick-and-mortar classrooms to digital classrooms. This school year, MIS continues to deliver its brand of education online through a primarily remote learning approach.

In *remote learning*, the lessons, topics and activities are delivered using the MIS digital classrooms, which are viewable 24/7. Arts, music and cooking activities will be integrated in the lessons. Weekly video calls allow for student-teacher interaction. This option ensures that students continue learning in the safety of their own homes. This type of learning also allows MIS to bring the Philippine and Montessori curriculum to learners, no matter where they are.

Remote learning can be combined with scheduled on-site school visits. This approach is called *blended learning*. In MIS, students who choose blended learning will continue to receive their lessons online. However, in addition to the online lessons, students will come to school once a week for on-site class discussions, recreation, other non-academic activities, and assessment. To observe proper health and safety protocols, students will be scheduled by batches.

The pronouncement by the DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones to comply with President Duterte's directive to forego face-to-face classes until a vaccine is found means that all MIS learners will begin the school year on remote learning for the whole first semester (July – November, 2020). If the situation does not show improvement in the second semester, then all learners will continue with remote learning. Learners on blended learning will be refunded a portion of the fees.

Whether families choose the pure remote learning approach or the blended learning approach, MIS stands by its commitment to deliver quality Philippine education through the Montessori way.

Below are the most-frequently asked questions from parents:

- Will School Year 2020-2021 continue?

Yes! Our schoolyear shall run from July 21, 2020 until April 23, 2021.

- How will the school year proceed this year?

MIS will primarily adopt a remote learning approach for the school year.

- Will there be any on-site classes at all?

On-site classes will be conducted ONLY when prevailing issues do not pose a threat to the health, safety and security of all learners, teachers and staff. The school will abide by government guidelines in this matter. As of now, face-to-face classes shall not be conducted until a vaccine is found (DepEd official statement, June 15, 2020).

- How did MIS come up with the idea of remote learning?

When the Metro Manila Community Quarantine was announced, the management knew it was a matter of time before the surrounding areas would be affected by the quarantine. At that

time, all departments had finished final exams except for the Senior High School Department. The management met with the faculty and initiated a move to online learning. A team of developers set up the digital classroom on Moodle, trained the faculty and students, and in three days' time, rolled out the SHS digital classroom. This allowed the students and faculty to successfully finish the school year. The same platform was subsequently adopted for use by the other departments.

- **How were the teachers trained to adapt to online learning?**

The developers conducted face-to-face training for the elementary teachers, and then did online training for junior high school, Children's House and guidance staff. A sample classroom was set up for the teachers to practice uploading and using the Moodle features. The best practice grounds were the summer classes for incoming Grade1 and incoming Grade 7, in which the teachers learned how to give clear instructions, sequence activities properly, and provide success-oriented activities with reasonable learning times. They also learned to use video calls as effective tools for the teaching-learning process.

- **What is the current direction of MIS?**

Because of the uncertain situation, MIS prepared two approaches for the school year. The primary approach is remote learning, in which all lessons and content are delivered online through the digital classroom. We will use this approach for all learners for the whole school year.

A secondary approach is the combination of online learning with on-site learning, known as blended learning. It is also possible to move from pure remote learning in the first semester to blended learning in the second semester. Please note that blended learning will only be allowed by the government if a vaccine is available.

- **How will MIS begin the school year?**

All levels will begin the school year on remote learning. At the end of the first semester (November), depending on government guidelines at that time and expert advice, on-site visits might begin for those who signed up for blended learning.

Those on the pure remote learning approach will be unable to participate in the face-to-face school meetings for the whole school year. *However, the online lessons for both blended learning and remote learning approaches remain the same.*

- **What action plan does MIS have to maintain social distancing protocols during blended learning?**

If it is already safe to do on-site school visits, individual classes in separate departments will be scheduled to come on specific days of the month. In turn, these classes will be broken into small groups of no more than 10 learners. To ensure social distancing, tables and chairs will be arranged so that students are more than 1 square meter apart. DepEd guidelines specify a maximum of 20 students per classroom, but we would like to go lower, say 10 persons per batch.

- What equipment is needed for remote learning?

You will need a good internet connection, a laptop or desk top, a headset (with mic) and the Zoom/Skype/Google Hangouts apps. A printer for downloadable material is also needed.

- Where will remote learning be conducted?

Remote learning will take place in digital classrooms (DCs) that have been set up on the Moodle platform. Students will be registered on Moodle, which will then send log-in details to the student's email address to allow entry into the digital classroom. Each student should have a unique email address for this purpose. Once in the digital classroom, students will be able to view only those classes in which he or she is enrolled. For example, a Grade 7 student will be able to see content in the Grade 7 subjects, but not Grade 8.

Students navigate through the platform and click on their classes to open topics, assignments, etc. Students accomplish the assignments and submit them through the DC.

Once a day, a subject teacher will schedule a video conference for specific groups of students, to follow up on the topics in the DC. These synchronous sessions will last 30 – 40 minutes.

The rest of the student's learning time will be spent on asynchronous learning – viewing, reading and doing the activities in the DC. Quizzes and exams will be given using the DC.

- Does it mean that only specific groups of students that need follow ups on the topics will be part of the video conference? Or will students be grouped (like per grade level because classes are integrated) and video conferencing done per group?

Weekly, there will be a rota of video calls **per subject**. For instance, the Math teacher might schedule her weekly video call on Mondays, Social Studies on Tuesdays, English on Wednesdays, etc. Since it will be difficult to interact with a lot of people on the call, the teachers may choose to split the class into smaller "call groups". How they choose to group the participants will be at their discretion. These calls won't last longer than 30 -40 minutes per session. These calls may be a follow-up to a lesson, or they may present the lessons, or they may be an assessment.

- Will there be a schedule per day for online discussions so that students will be looking forward to it?

Yes! Schedules for the video calls will be announced ahead of time in the digital classroom, and participants will be extended an invitation by the teacher through email. If students cannot attend the call, they can communicate with their teacher to make new arrangements. This communication takes place in the message area where parents and students can leave notes for the teachers, and vice-versa. The video sessions can also be recorded for later viewing.

Live chat schedules may pose a problem for siblings if they are scheduled at the same time. To avoid this, parents or learners can email the teacher to ask for an alternative schedule.

- How many hours per day is the program for remote learning?

The expected general learning time is from 9 am until 3 pm, Mondays till Fridays. The teachers and coordinators will make sure that the combination of daily activities and learning areas is

fun, reasonable and that the tasks are manageable. This time period helps give a structure to children's home study routines, but the 24/7 feature of the DC allows children to also adjust their study time to suit their learning style.

- Will the online class be simultaneous for all grade levels?

Yes. All lessons and topics in the digital classrooms for all levels are viewable 24/7. This means that lessons can be viewed by your children simultaneously. Students can work at their own pace and submit their assignments within a reasonable time frame.

- If so, will the kids need a laptop each?

They do not need a laptop each, because the digital classroom can be viewed from any mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet. Thus, getting them one laptop each is a personal choice. Since the mode of learning is mostly "asynchronous", siblings can take turns viewing their lessons, and parents can decide who needs more screen time depending on the output needed.

- How will the kids know what to do first?

The sequence of activities and topics is arranged by day, so that it is easy for parents and children to know where to start and where to end. The teachers will ensure that the workload will be easy to accomplish and not too long, so that online learning will continue to remain fun for the learner. To view the DC's lessons, all learners need to do is scroll down the screen.

- What kinds of lessons or activities should we expect?

For the regular school year, Elementary and Junior High School students will have 5 major subjects: Languages (English and Filipino), Math, Science, and Social Studies (History and Geography). **Each day of the week will feature one major subject as the main lesson.**

In turn, the main lesson will be sandwiched between Physical Fitness (such as following an exercise video), Wellness (stretching, meditation, yoga, stories with values) and Literacy (reading books or assigned readings). There will also be Performing Arts (singing, declaiming) and Visual Arts (drawing, painting, etc.). This sequence ensures a balance of all activities.

Some of the lessons will be downloadable as worksheets, while others will be videos, slides or simple task instructions. Outputs will be in the form of accomplished worksheets, videos showing the student performing a task, and written activities.

The teaching approach will be integrated where possible. Arts, music, TLE, HELE and other non-academic activities can be inserted as part of the academic lessons. For example, in Science, a remote learning activity may ask a student to cook a viand. While cooking, the student takes note of the physical and chemical changes in matter. This activity merges TLE and Science. The cooking is then recorded on video, and the student can talk during the video about the changes in matter, also targeting English. Thus, when the video is uploaded, portions of the student's performance go into Science, TLE and English (co-grading).

Because the DC is 24/7, lessons and materials can be viewed anytime. However, tasks, assignments and other output will be open only for a specific period (usually 7 am until 9 pm).

- What about tests and quizzes?

The DC has a taskbar feature which allows a learner to see the upcoming schedule of activities. It also shows how long these activities will be open. The student needs to accomplish the work and submit this before the activity closes.

Quizzes and tests work in the same manner. The task bar will show the date and time when these will be available to students. The learner then takes the quiz or test during this time period. Re-takes can be programmed by the teacher to allow several attempts. However, once the student clicks on the test or quiz to open it, he will have to complete it.

Learners can definitely expect to receive quizzes and tests per subject. However, this will not happen everyday, since departments will work to ensure that balanced learning takes place.

Students who are unable to take tests and quizzes for legitimate reasons can communicate with the teacher regarding this.

- What about books?

Books and uniforms are not necessary for remote learning, because the material will be uploaded into the digital classroom.

- How will students be assessed or graded?

MIS will still apply its grading system of Individual Work (IW), Individual Performance (IP) and Quarterly Test (QT). Marks for IW will be taken from the quality of their submitted work. Marks for IP will be taken from participation in the video conferences. Finally, the QT score will be taken from individual video calls (oral exams) for elementary students. For JHS and SHS students, teachers can tag a variety of other output and tests as the QT score.

- When will lessons be unhidden? Is it possible for a child to do all the activities in one or two days?

We plan to unhide lessons every week, but this can change depending on circumstances. As for doing all activities right away, no it is not possible. Teachers put a lot of thought into the sequence of subject matter – presentation, follow-up and assessment. The sequence follows a timetable which opens tasks or activities in chronological order, with particular dates and times, and then closes them. This allows diverse learners to go through lessons at their own pace, within a reasonable learning period.

- When parents send email, what is the turn-around time?

Teachers will monitor the DC and do video calls within the 9 am – 3 pm period. During this time, they are expected to answer email, respond to messages in the chat area and do consults with parents. If an email is sent to a teacher after this time, it is reasonable to expect a reply the following day.

- In remote learning, do we also respect holidays and no-class days?

The beauty of remote learning is that no-class days do not matter. However, if there is a holiday, teachers can adjust the schedule of deadlines. It is also possible for them not to schedule any tasks during holidays.

- Is the remote learning program designed so that children can be independent?

Yes. For older children, the remote learning program would require very little parent supervision, perhaps only in the area of technical troubleshooting. However, younger children will definitely need active parent participation to be able to carry out the activities.

- How can young children do online learning? My preschooler cannot read yet.

Parents of learners in MCH, Lower Elementary and the Special Support programs have to actively support their children's distance learning, as this medium of instruction is vastly different from face-to-face interactions in regular classes. At times, the instructions on the subject matter will be addressed to the parents, so that they can do these with the children. Younger children will also need help with technical setup, troubleshooting, and establishing a home study routine. Thus, parental involvement is critical for online learning to be successful.

- Pure remote learning fees include technical services. What are these?

Technical services include monthly fees for our IT infrastructure -- all the service fees needed to maintain and host the digital classroom sites and content, the monthly fees for digital classroom technical management and troubleshooting, and the monthly fees for our school internet, enrollment system database and upkeep.

- What happens to remote learning if on-site classes are allowed to resume?

If on-site classes are allowed to resume, *the digital classroom and live video calls shall continue to deliver the lessons.*

Blended learning students will be scheduled to visit school in batches out of consideration for safety and health protocols. They will go to school once a week for scheduled non-academic activities and follow-up class meetings.

- What is the assurance that the health of our son will not be at risk if we send him (grade 1) to a blended learning setup?

While we have action plans for social distancing and health protocols in school, we cannot guarantee what happens OUTSIDE school. If you are not confident about the situation, pure remote learning is best.

- I'm worried about the safety of my children. Is it okay to stay on remote learning even if on-site classes resume?

Yes, it is! We strongly advise parents to enroll their children in the pure or full remote learning option. This will allow students to learn from their homes throughout the school year. This type of program is also ideal for students who do not live near the school campus. It is easy enough to switch to a blended learning approach at the end of the first semester if the government deems it safe for face-to-face classes to proceed.

- If ever we enroll our children as regular students (wherein if Covid is already stabilized and physical schooling is allowed), would we be allowed to change our minds to just proceed with online schooling for the whole year? Another scenario is if ever we enroll our children in a remote classroom for the whole year and we changed our minds to let them attend classes already in school when Covid is already stabilized, would this be allowed?

Families on pure remote learning in the first semester can shift to the regular (i.e. blended learning) approach in the second semester; in this case, the difference between the fees will be added to the second semester. Shifting from pure remote learning to blended learning can only occur in the second semester to prevent errors in our enrollment system.

However, students who chose the regular option for the school year cannot move to pure remote learning. Instead, should the government's directive apply for the whole school year, unused fees will be refunded to students at the end of the school year.

If the situation changes to allow face-to-face learning in the second semester, students who do not attend scheduled school meetings will be marked absent and no refunds will be given.