Using Google Classroom (Students)

What is Google Classroom?

Google Classroom is a part of Google G Suite - a system that staff and students have used for almost two years for school e-mail, and file storage.

In this time, many subjects have begun using Google Classroom to support teaching and learning. During the school closure, all work will be set through Google Classroom, except for those students where other arrangements have been made.

Checking for School E-mail

It is important that students continue to check their school e-mail account daily, during the school closure. Where assignments have been set using Google Classroom, students will receive e-mail reminders. Staff may also send invitations to Join new Google Classes, and provide feedback on students' work.

We would recommend that where ever possible, students make use of a PC, laptop, Mac, or Chromebook to access their school e-mail and Google Classroom. While it is possible to use smart phones and tablets, their limited screen space and typing ability can make it difficult to work. There are also potential pitfalls if these devices attempt to access Google Classes using students' personal e-mail accounts, instead of their school e-mail address.

These instructions assume that you are using a Windows PC, and Google Chrome, which is our recommended web browser.
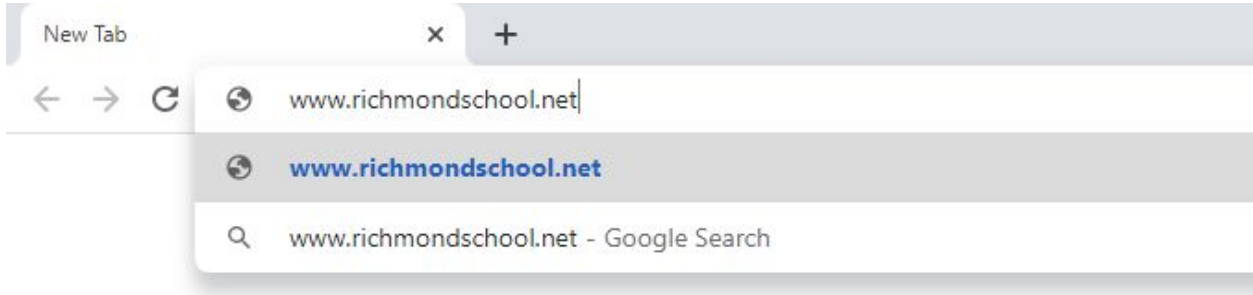
Begin by launching Google Chrome.

When Google Chrome opens, it will appear similar to below:
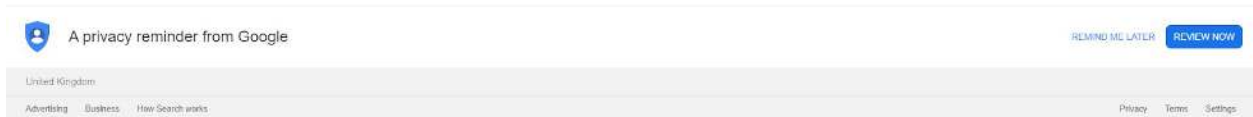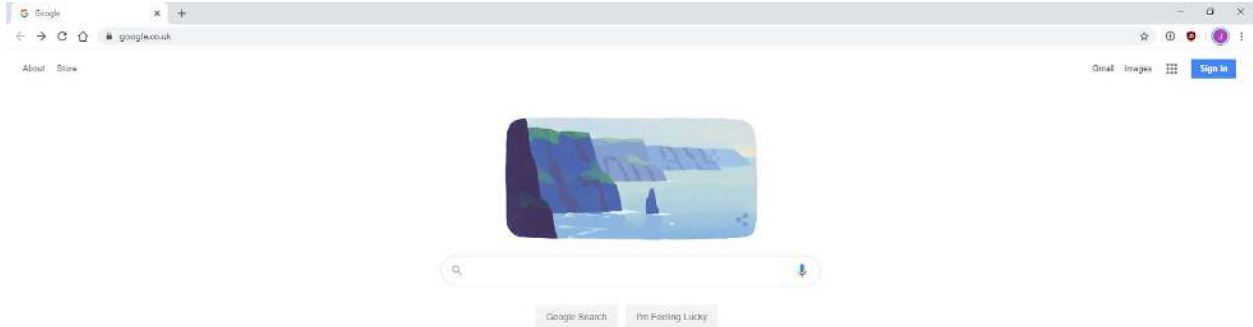
It is recommended that students use the Richmond School website (www.richmondschool.net) to log in to their school e-mail account.

Open the Richmond School website by typing www.richmondschool.net into the address bar, and pressing Enter:

Alternatively, open the Richmond School website by searching for "Richmond School", and clicking on the result below:
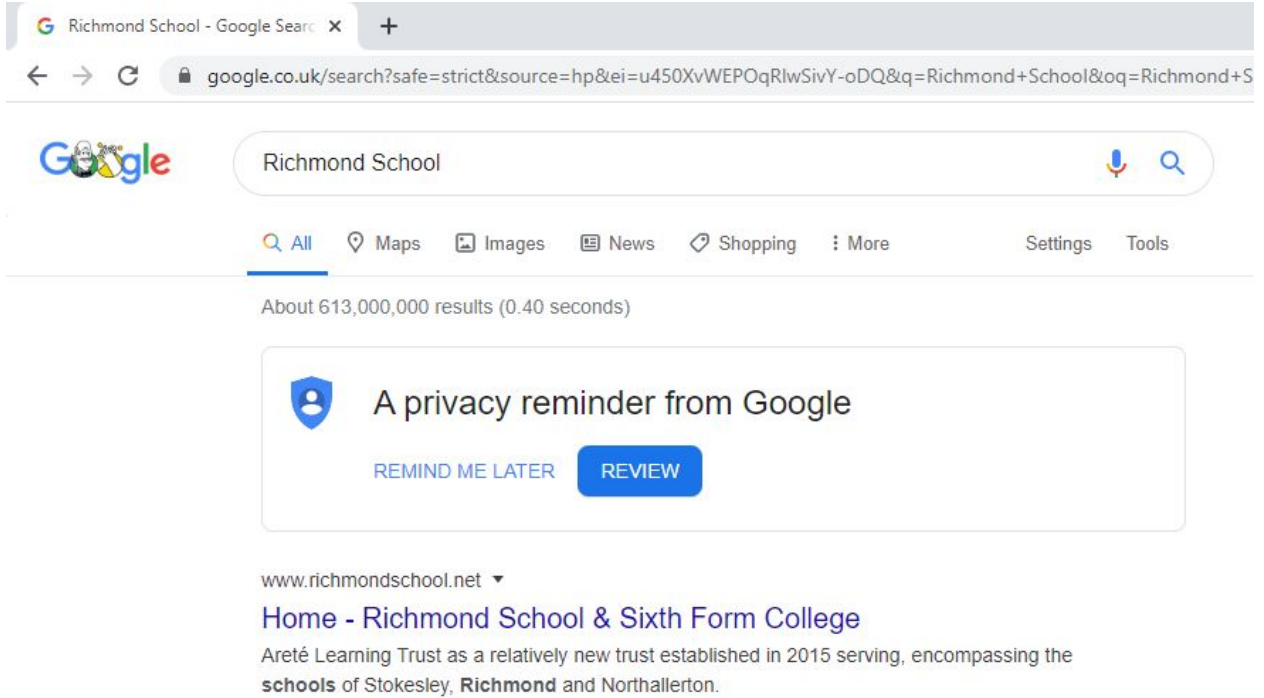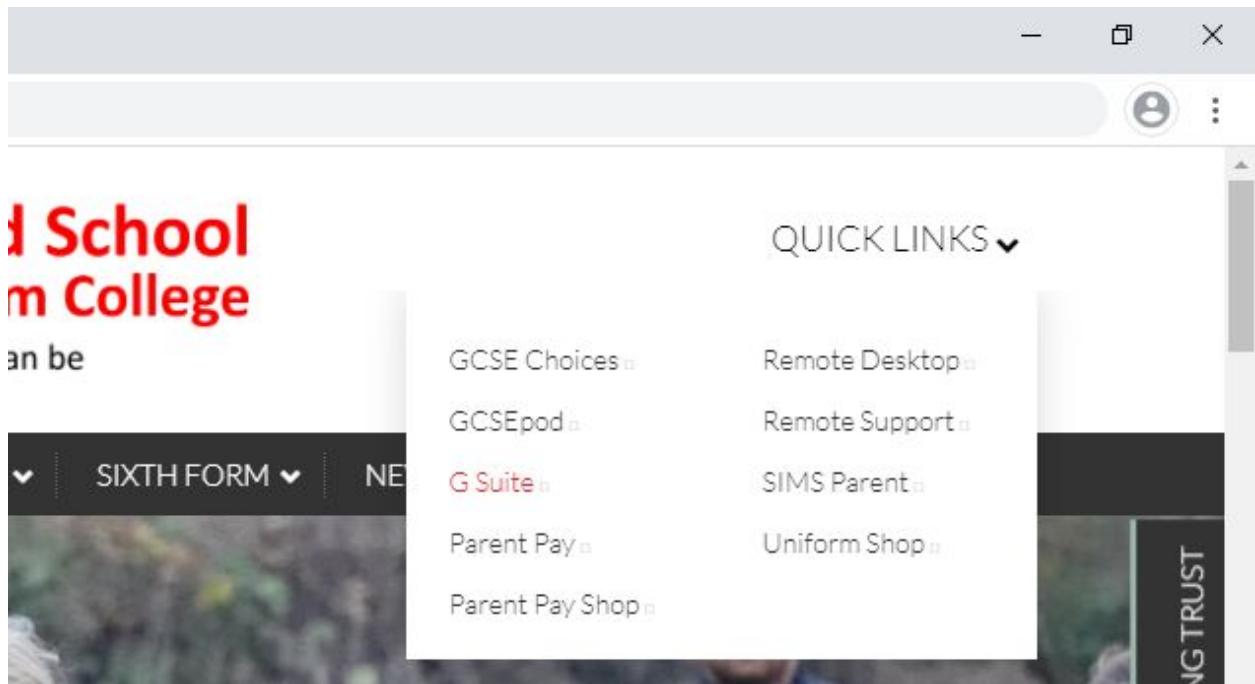
The school website has changed recently, and now looks as follows:

Click on the Quick Links menu, at the top right.

A menu will open:

Click on G Suite.

This will take you to the Google Sign-in page.

Students should enter their school e-mail address, and click Next.

When asked to enter a password, students should enter their network password, and click Next.

Note: Many students report that they have forgotten their e-mail address or password, when in fact there are only two things that students need know, and they use constantly in school. When a student logs on to one of our school computers they must enter a username (such as 14ab23 or 15jsmith) and a password. It is this username that is the first part of a student's e-mail address, and this password that students enter to log in to their school e-mail. By logging in using the Richmond School website, Google automatically add @richmondschool.net to the end of students' username to get the full e-mail address, such as 14ab23@richmondschool.net. If you do not use the Richmond School website to log in to G Suite, then the full e-mail address would normally need to be typed when asked to sign in.

After signing in, students will be taken to their school e-mail automatically:
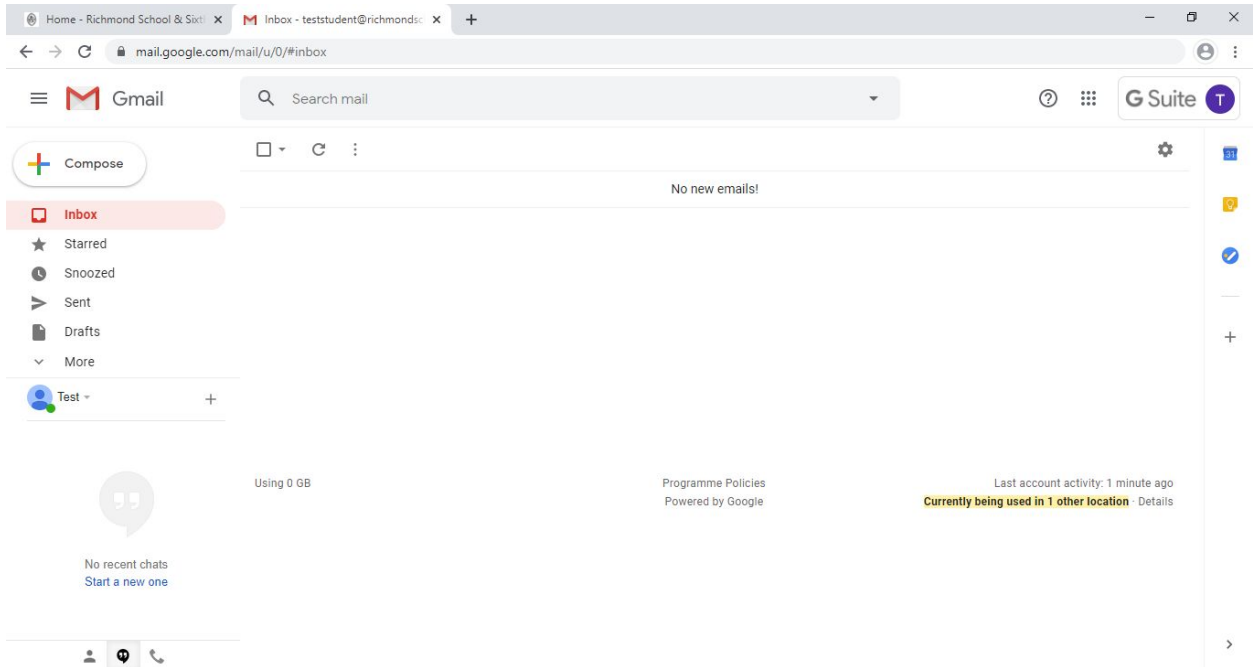
Students' e-mail accounts look and function identically to Gmail, which many people are already familiar with using. In the screenshot above, there are no new messages. During the school closure, e-mail will be the primary means of communication with students. When new messages arrive, students may click on them to read them.

## The Importance of Signing Out of Other Accounts

All of the most frequent problems that students report, in accessing their school e-mail or Google Classroom at home, other than not knowing their e-mail address and password, have a single cause:

Any time that a student, or family member who uses the same computer, signs in to Google using a personal e-mail address - such as myemailaddress@gmail.com, and does not sign out, there is the risk that when the computer is later used for school work, the computer will attempt to use this personal account in place of a student's school e-mail address, at any point, even after the student has signed in to their school e-mail address following the instructions above. This most often results in students being unable to access Google Classroom, and being asked to request access to files that teachers have sent them, and they should be able to open. The issue is most likely to crop up on smartphones and personal Chromebooks, if students log on to them using their own personal e-mail address.

Thankfully, there is a simple workaround in Google Chrome.

If students encounter issues accessing Google Drive, Classroom, or other services, when they believe they have signed in correctly using their school e-mail address, the first thing to do is close all Google Chrome windows.

Launch Google Chrome again, but then, click on the three dots menu at the top right of the Google Chrome window:
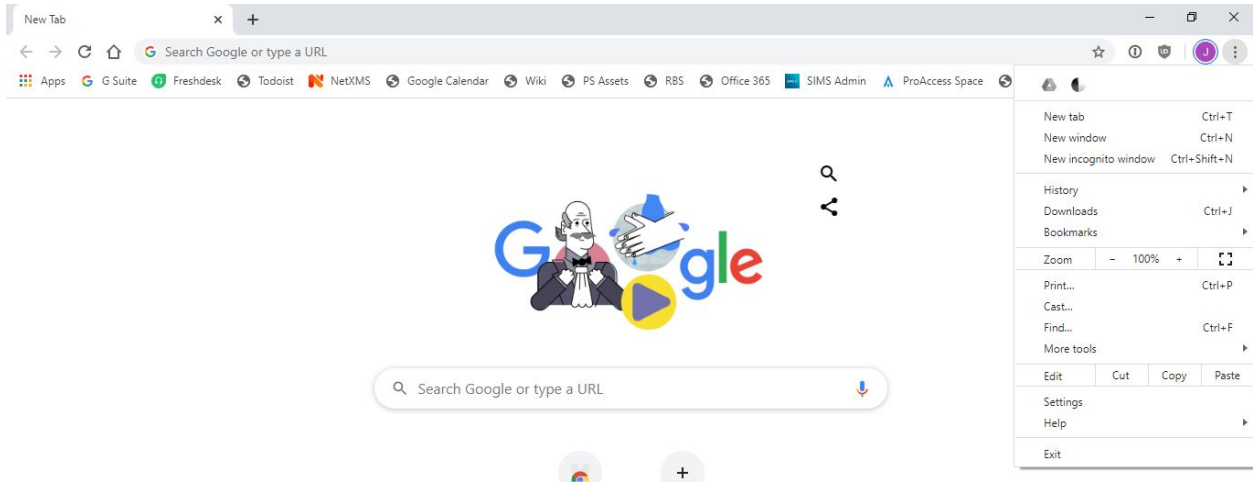
Choose New incognito window.

A window such as the one below will appear:
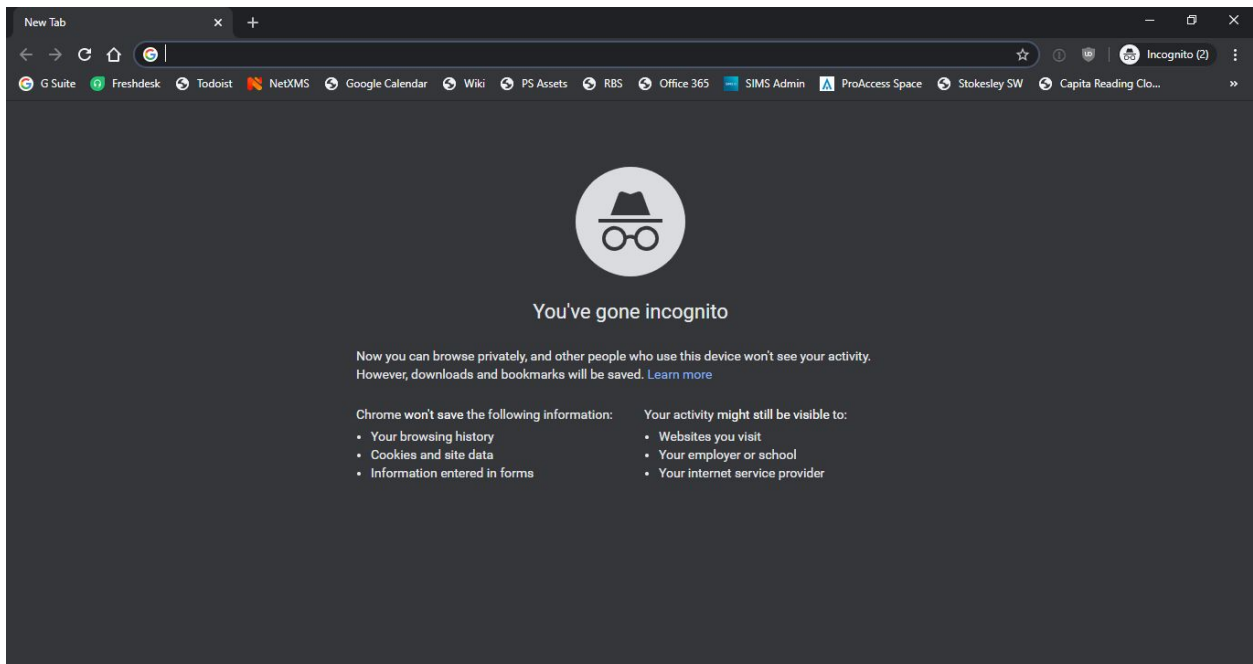
Notice that the window has a clear message that "You've gone incognito".

Students should then follow the instructions in the "Checking for School E-mail" section to sign in and work as normal, using this Incognito window. There is no possibility of other accounts on a computer conflicting with a school e-mail address, if all Google Chrome windows were closed, and then a student uses an Incognito window to work.

This workaround will similarly work on a personal Chromebook. If the option to open a new Incognito window is missing, and you have installed or configured parental control software on the Chromebook, then you may need to adjust the settings of this software to obtain it.
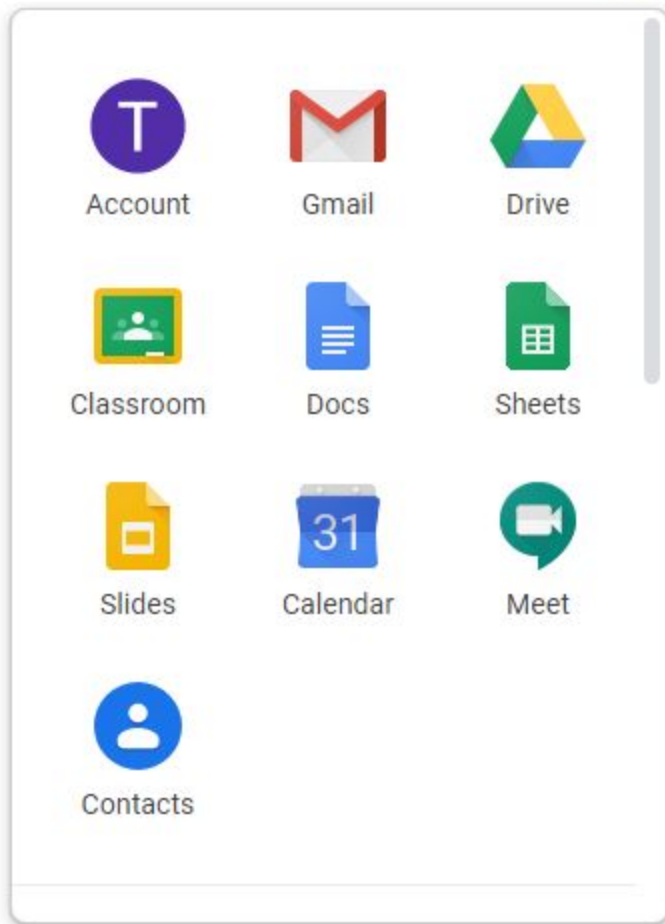
Launching Google Classroom

Assuming that a student has logged in to their school e-mail account, and has checked for any new e-mails, they may access Google Classroom using the "Google apps button", at the top right of the screen. The button resembles a three by three grid of dots or squares.
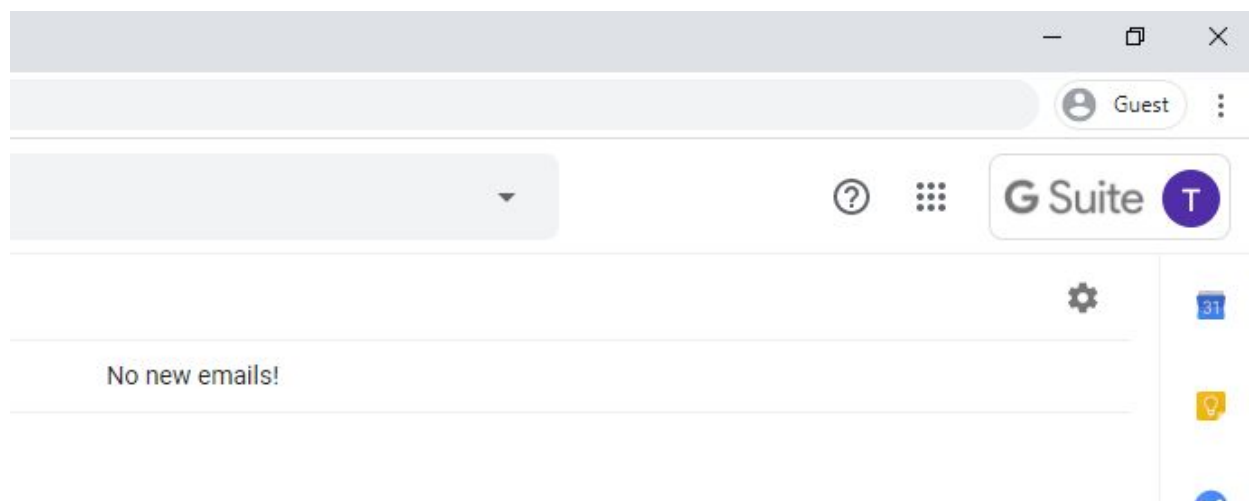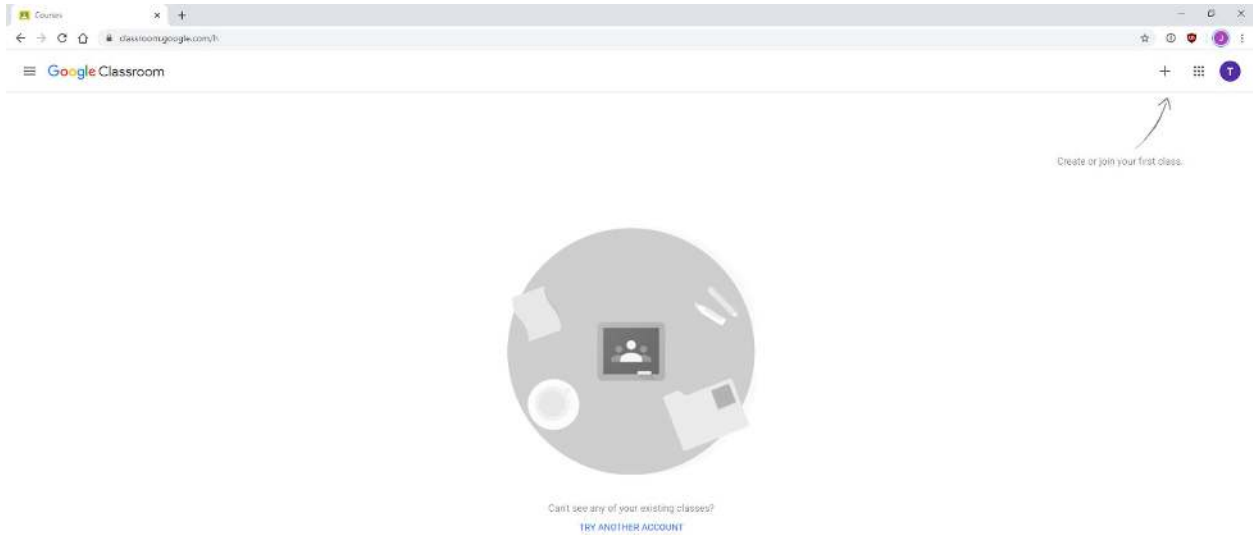

Click on the Google apps button, the Google apps menu will appear:

Click on Classroom. This will open Google Classroom:

In the screenshot above, the student is not a member of any Google Classes. If they were, the Google Classes they are a part of will appear as a series of coloured boxes. The next section explains more.

Opening a Google Class

Open opening Google Classroom, students will be shown a series of coloured boxes, representing the Google Classes of which they are a member:
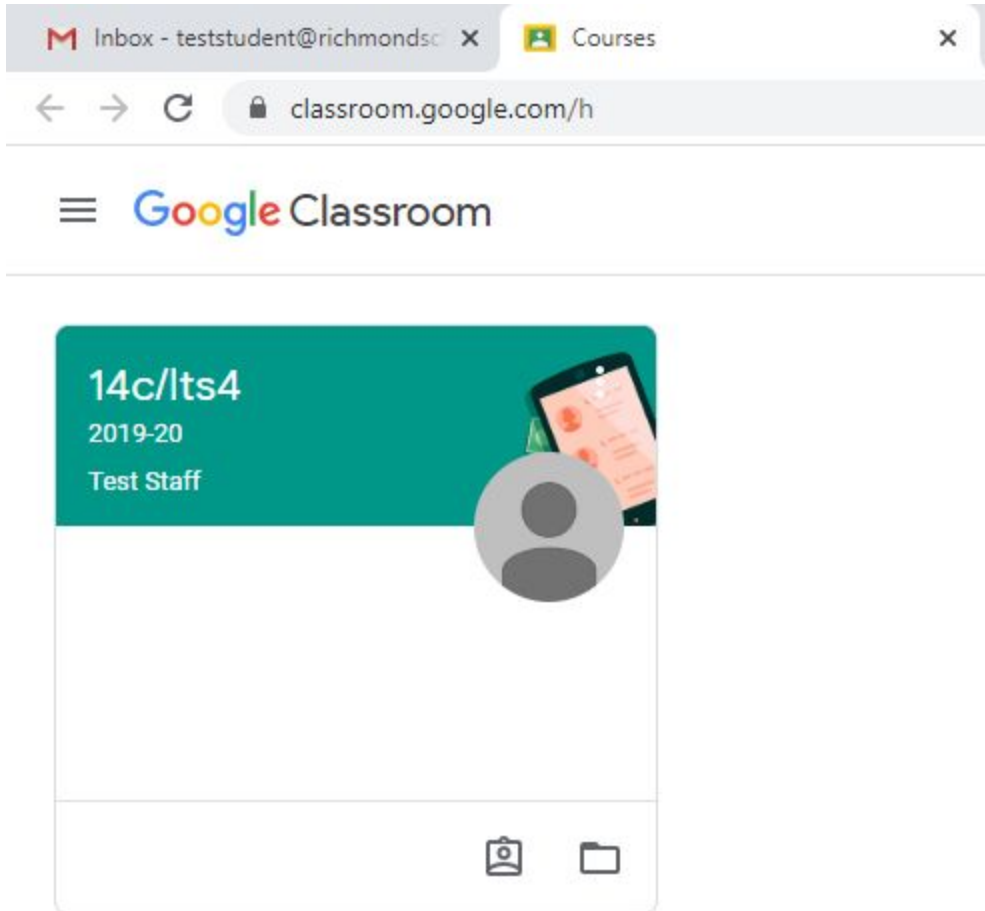
In this case, the student is a member of the "14c/Its4" Class, which is taught by the teacher "Test Staff".

To open a class, students should click on the class name, in this case, "14c/Its4".

The Google Class will appear:
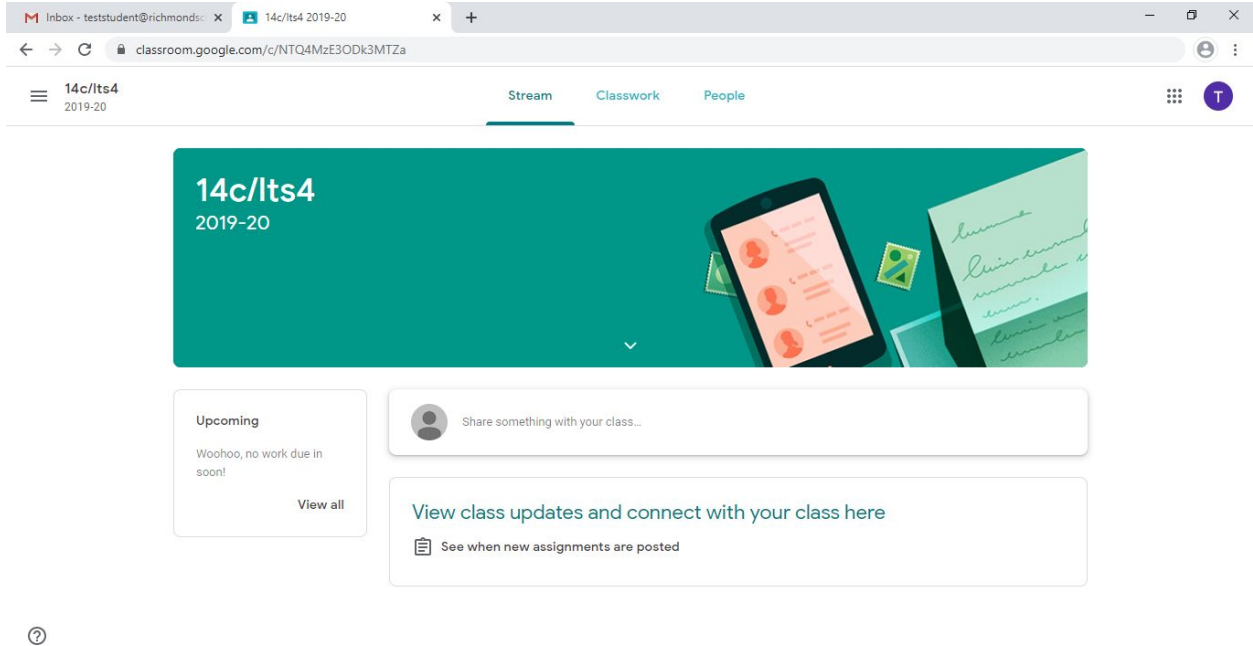
There are two locations that work or messages may appear within a Google Class. The first is on the Class Stream, the second is in Classwork.

To switch between the Stream and Classwork for a given Class, students should switch between them by clicking on the buttons at the top of the page:
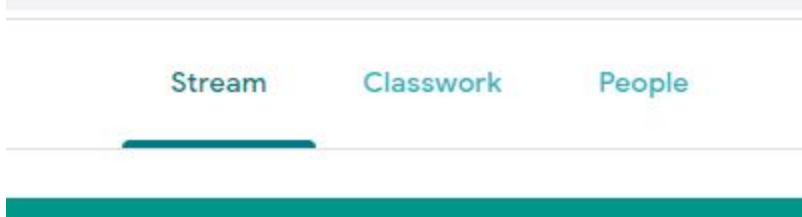

Each Google Class has its own Stream and Classwork area, and so it is important that students check each of these areas for each of the Classes they are in each day.

Responding to Join Requests

When a member of staff adds a student to a Google Class, an e-mail is sent to the student's school e-mail address, inviting them to Join the class. It is important that students check their e-mail regularly, and respond by Joining the Google Classes that staff add them to, during the school closure. If students do not do this, they will not be able to access work that is set.

When a member of staff invites a student to Join a Google Class, the invitation e-mail the student receives will appear similar to below:
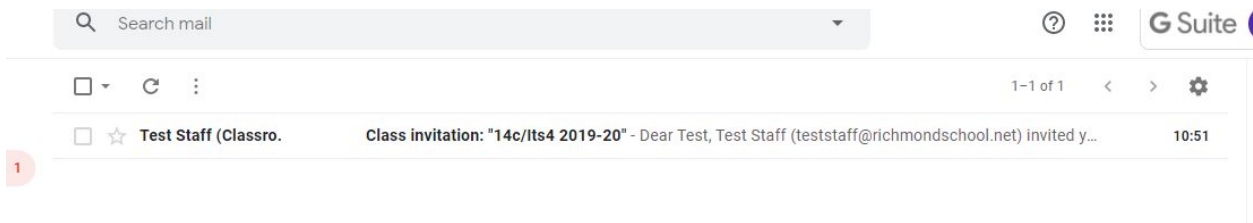
The name of the member of staff who has invited them is clearly visible, as is the name of the class, and the words "Class invitation".

Students should click the invitation, to open it.
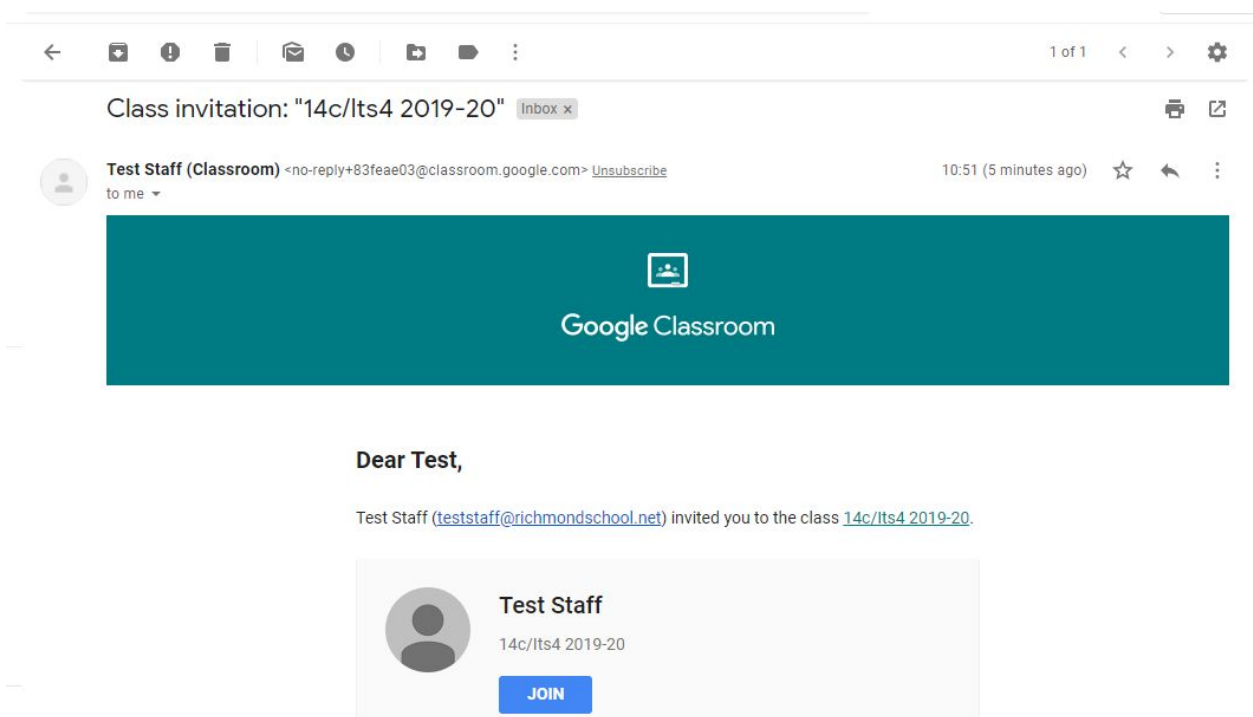
It is vital that students click the Join button in the e-mail to Join the Google Class.

When the button is clicked, students are taken to the Google Class automatically.

Accessing Classwork

Although some Class content may be added to a Google Class Stream (see the "Opening a Google Class" section for more information), the majority is expected to be added to the Classwork area.

To access the Classwork area for a Google Class, the student should first open the Class (covered in the "Opening a Google Class" section).

The Class should appear similar to the screenshot below:
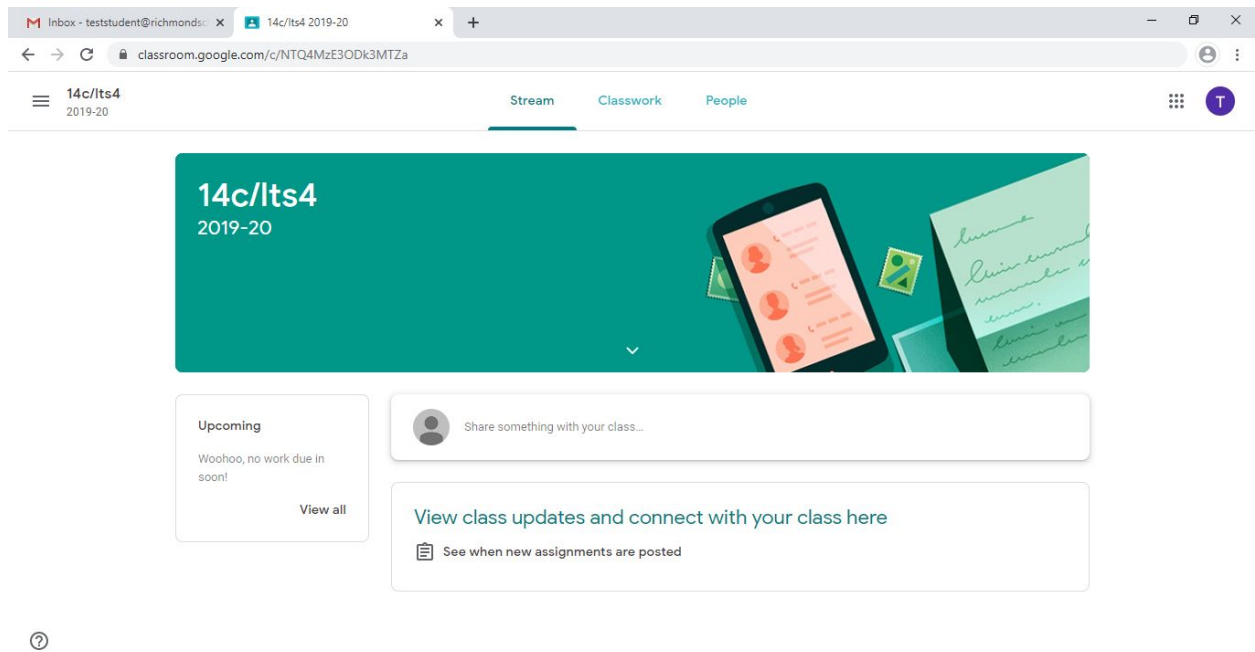
To access Classwork for the class, students should click on the Classwork button at the top of the screen:
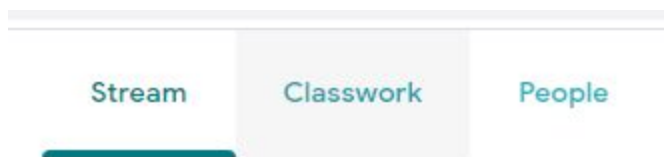
The Classwork area will then appear.

Clicking on an item within classwork will display more information, including resources, and details of any work that must be completed:

More information on Assignments can be found in the "Completing Assignments" section.

Checking for New Work

It is important that students check for e-mail messages sent by staff, including invitations to Join new Google Classes, and feedback on work. Students should also open each Google Class of which they are a member, and check the Stream and Classwork areas each day.

For more information on how to do this, please see the other sections of this document.

Details on how to complete Assignments that have been set in Google Classroom can be found in the next section.

Completing Assignments

Not all work that students must complete will be set as an Assignment in Google Classroom. However, Assignments will be set, and it is important to understand them.

When an Assignment has been created in the Classwork area of a Google Class, students are notified by e-mail. In addition, when they visit the Classwork area of the Google Class, they will see assignment in the list, as well as any date that it is due:
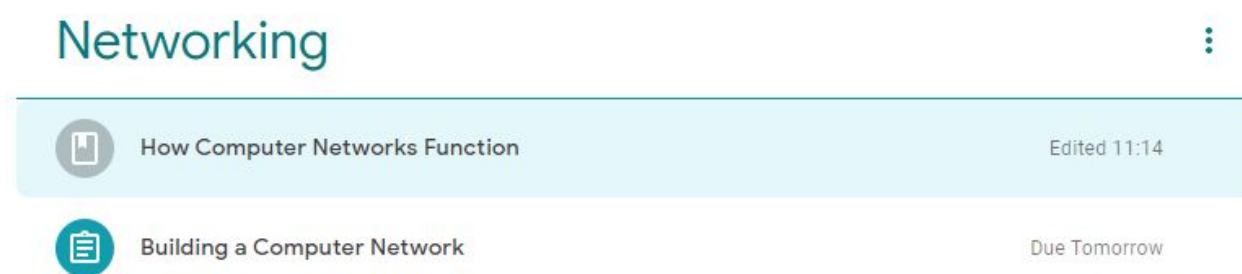
The "Building a Computer Network" assignment above is due Tomorrow.

When a student clicks on an Assignment, they will be shown additional information:

The Teacher has provided a link to a website, and has given instructions that students should click on the attached "Writeup" document, and use it to write about their work. When students are finished, they should click Hand in to hand their work in.

A student may click on View assignment to open the main Assignment page.
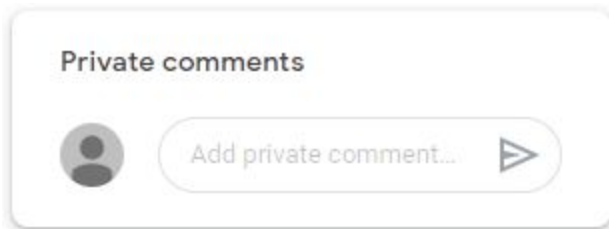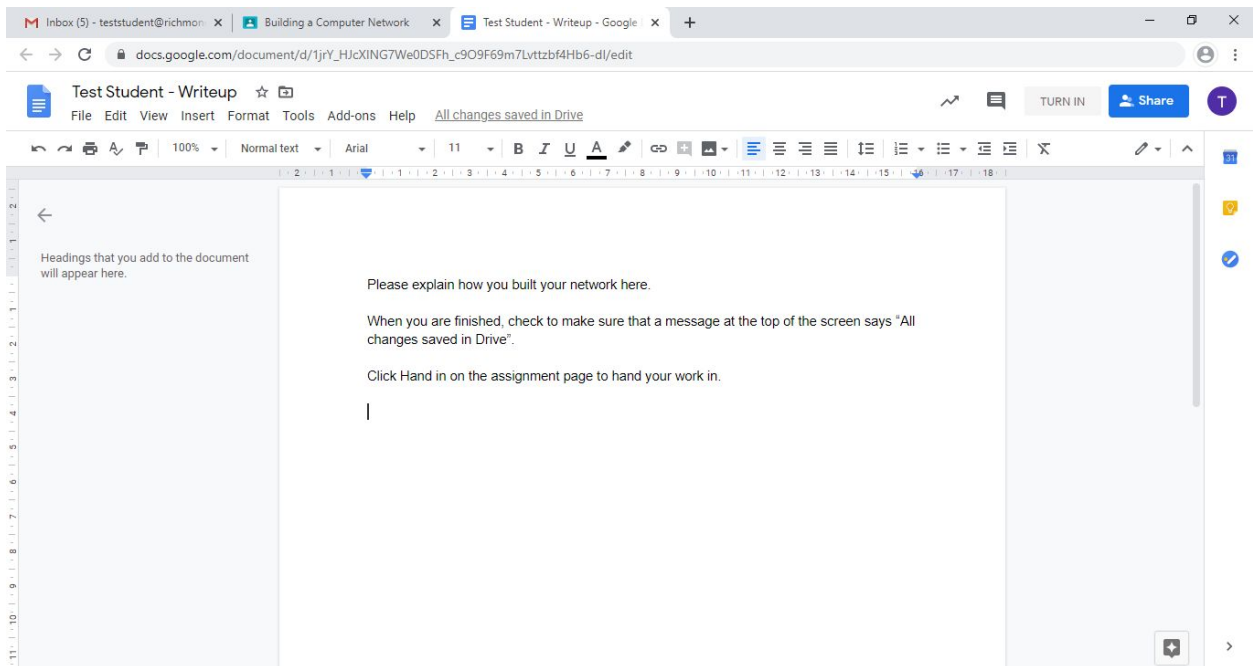

Here the student may click on the "Writeup" document at the top right, to begin working:
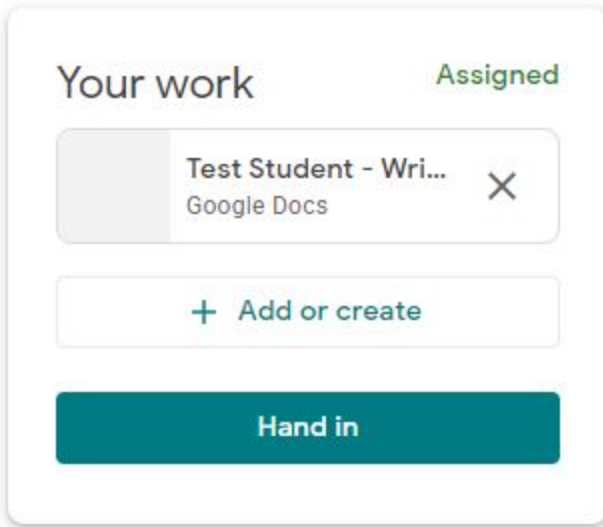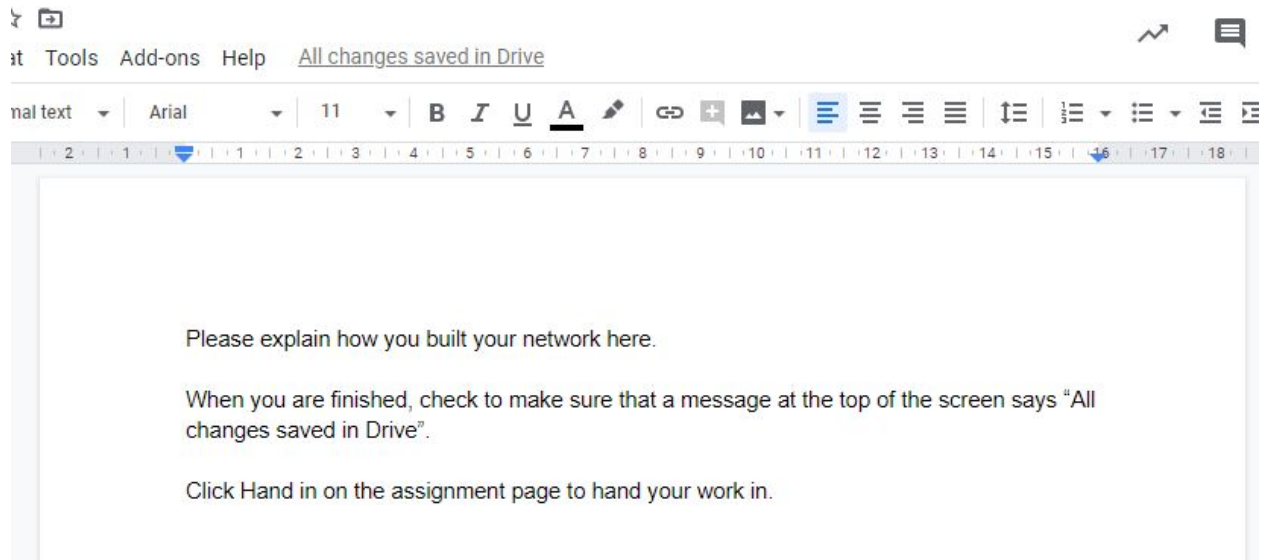
Any questions for the teacher may be asked using the Private comments box.

When a student clicks on the Writeup document, it will open in a new tab:

As the file is a Google Docs file, it will be saved automatically, as students work:


When the message "All changes saved in Drive" is visible at the top, the tab can safely be closed.

Students may close the file, and come back to it later by clicking on it in the Assignment.

When a student is satisfied that they have completed the work, they may submit the Assignment by clicking on "Hand in" on the main Assignment page:
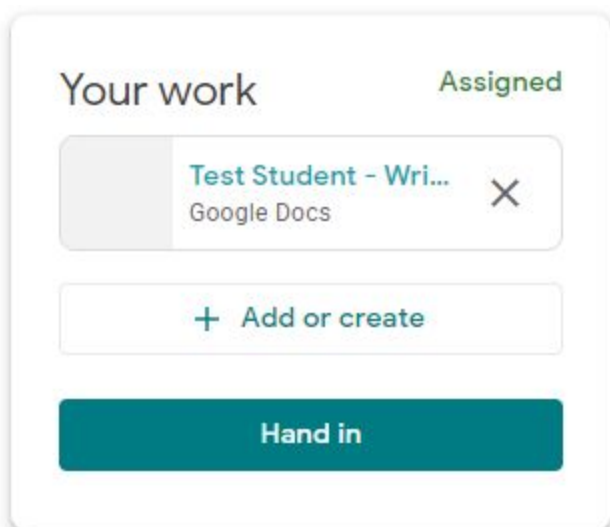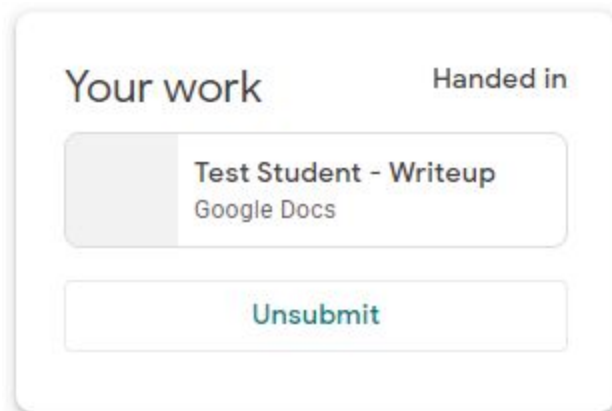

They will be asked to confirm their submission:
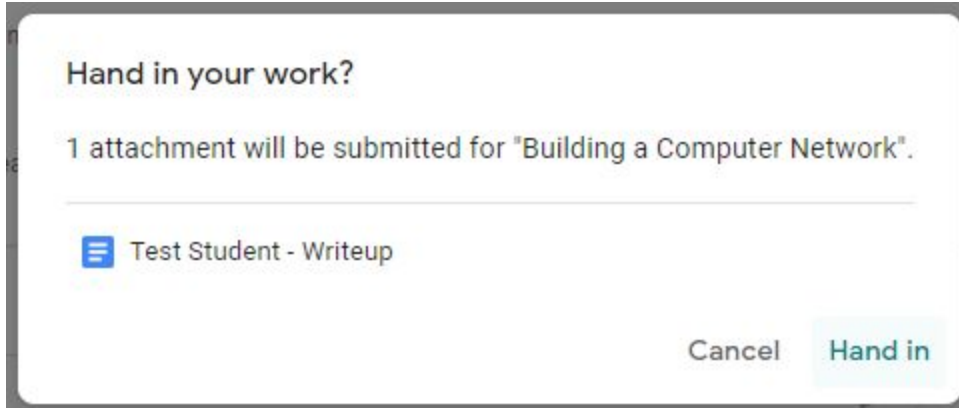
On clicking Hand in, their work will then be sent to their teacher.

The Assignment page will change to show the work has been handed in:

Using Google Classroom on Mobile Phones

It is certainly possible for students to access their school e-mail and Google Classroom on their mobiles phones, and there are Gmail and Google Classroom apps available for iPhones and Android. However, the lack of screen space and absence of a keyboard can make smartphones difficult to use for school work. It is common for students to run into difficulty using their smartphone, if they have signed into other apps using their own personal Gmail address. For the same reasons that accounts can conflict on PCs, laptops, Macs, and Chromebooks, as explained earlier. For this reason, we would recommend that students use smartphones in addition to a PC, laptop, Mac, or tablet, rather than exclusively, if at all possible. It will not be possible to troubleshoot and support students' use of mobile phones during the school closure.