



24 April 2020

Dear Parents, Carers, and St Alban's community,

I do hope that you had a blessed Easter, and that, however strange or different, the peace and joy of the Risen Christ supported you through this time. Hope is always with us, as He is. My expectation is that you have had some time to relax and adjust to this new, but temporary, way of life.

We have taken feedback from staff and parents on how things are going: the challenges, successes and potential improvements in our systems. We know that schools are doing things differently. We have been in contact with schools across Suffolk and Essex and looked at what is working well. With every decision comes the practical aspect – all schools have different resources and have been affected differently by the pandemic. Mrs Lawrence has outlined the Teaching and Learning expectations in the second section of this communication. Mrs Morris has sent out amazing transition work for our Year 11 students moving into our Sixth Form – we are way ahead of other colleges here!

Parents of Year 10 and Year 12 have shared their concern at losing key time in their Key Stages, pre exams. With the strong support of the teaching unions, headteachers across the country are making this point loud and clear to the government. We will do all we can to keep you updated, and will look to make any necessary changes to support their learning. Bear in mind that our staff will look to fill any gaps left by the closure when we return, so it is best for students not to worry about things during the closure.

With respect to Years 11 and 13, Mr Corless has written a piece specifically for you in the final section of this letter.

The government's Free School Meals plan is now in operation. All parents entitled to this should have now either received the paper copy or the electronic code. Please contact the school if there is an issue with this.

Communication

We have been in regular contact with students through subjects and tutors via messaging on eSchools and via email. This has been to ensure their academic progress and personal wellbeing. It is also important that you feel that you can have contact with your child's form tutor – this is optional, however there may be things you wish them to know in the current situation. Details of how to do this can be found at <https://www.st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk/Covid19/>.

Specifically:

- if you have some questions about subject work, contact your child's teacher.
- If you need to communicate generally, go to your child's tutor
- If there are any safeguarding concerns, contact either Mrs Arthur (Years 7,8) or Mrs Land (Years 9,10,11) or Mrs Morris/Mrs Robinson (Years 12,13)

If you haven't already, please see our [Instagram page](#) for daily updates.



Headteacher: Matt Baker

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If you need to talk to us, the school is open from 9am until 3pm in the week. Please note the school will be closed for the Bank Holiday, Friday 8 May. If this causes any issues, please let us know.

God Bless

Matt Baker and the Leadership Team

Teaching and Learning – Mrs L Laurence

The first and most important point to make here is that we have had to develop these expectations in the knowledge that some of our teachers and support staff have very little time to give to us at the moment, because of their own domestic circumstances.

It is certainly true that there may be significant variation in what your child's teachers are going to be able to provide for them directly. However, please be assured that, in cases where staff are very busy dealing with their own dependents or are unwell, we will be doing everything we can to 'plug gaps' through the intervention of subject and faculty leads, as well as senior staff. In all cases, we would ask you to be aware that staff are in highly-unusual situations and may not always be able to respond to you as quickly as they normally would.

We will do our best to adapt to our new circumstances and to keep our students learning. It is also important that as the lockdown situation is lasting for an undetermined but long period of time, we need to consider the very best way to support learning, but in a realistic and unpressured way which is compatible with the challenging circumstances a lot of families are facing. What we are not able to do is teach remotely, teaching and learning has to be an interactive process, and although this gives an opportunity for independent learning, the provision we are putting in place aims to compliment this, not replicate the classroom experience.

The term-time plan for year 7, 8, 9 and 10 is as follows:

1. Staff will ensure that students are being set specific tasks for their subjects. These do not have to follow the school timetable day-by-day but rather should be refreshed every two weeks. The extent of the tasks should reflect the frequency of their timetabled lessons – so that maths, science and English teachers might set a few more tasks than teachers of other subjects. However, we have not asked staff to plan and set precisely '75 mins worth of work' for every lesson, as this is likely to be too problematic in many cases.

We also strongly recommend the use of the BBC bitesize learning resources, available at bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons, as these lessons are an excellent resource to facilitate learning. Also available is the National Academy at www.thenational.academy/online-classroom, which has resources each day in a range of subjects. We will be investigating these new resources and staff will indicate which of these resources will be of particular use in their class.

2. Staff will use either eSchools, school email accounts or Microsoft Teams to set work, and to respond to students where appropriate.
3. I would ask you to ensure that your child is checking their school email. If you have technical difficulties, please contact your child's form tutor (emails for staff are their initial and surname followed by @st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk) alternatively use the main school address: general@st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk

4. Once every four weeks (at least) students will submit one piece of completed work per subject to their teachers for feedback. This can be their best piece from a range of tasks, or a specific piece requested by the teacher. Please note that, in some subjects (e.g. PE and Drama), there may be limits on what kind of feedback can be carried out. Your child's teachers will clarify for them how they would like students to show or comment on the tasks or activities with which they have been involved.
5. In line with guidance from the main teaching union, in particular the NEU, and advice from our Safeguarding specialists, staff will not use Teams or any other system to deliver live lessons via video links. Unfortunately, there are simply too many potential problems involved with this sort of interaction with students. If you have any comments or questions on this policy, please do send them to me rather than to individual teachers.
6. In situations where students cannot access a computer, they can complete work on paper and can then take a photo of it and email it to the relevant teacher, using any available smartphone. If this is not possible for your child, and they do not have access to a suitable computer, please contact their form tutor to discuss alternative ways of sharing work.

For year 11 students:

7. Students in year 11 will now not be set GCSE work by their teachers and should focus on preparing for the next stage of their education and the transition to this. A level students should complete the transition work on our website www.st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk/6th-Form/Sixth-Form-Transition-Work/ in the first instance, then teachers will be able to set subsequent work and give feedback as appropriate.

For those students who plan to go to another post 16 provider, we suggest doing the same sort of tasks that they will have set for you.

Please note that further information on sixth form learning has been sent by Mrs Morris

Keeping in touch

Please ensure that your child is in contact with their teachers. If staff report that they have not received any communication from a particular student by Monday 27 April, staff will follow up with a phone call home to support with the student's engagement with school work.

In addition Katherine our school chaplain is emailing students regularly with prayers and reflections, and tutors are sending PYF activities and our Careers Team continue to send information to students about their futures. Our Instagram page is updated with motivational images and important wellbeing reminder. We encourage students to engage in these valuable resources.

Please accept our ongoing support and prayers for your families, we wish for our students to be completing some learning and finding out about what interests them in the world, reading and keeping their brains and bodies active. We don't wish to place anyone under pressure to meet strict deadlines, and wellbeing is our utmost priority.

Year 11 & 13 – Summer 2020 GCSE and A level grades – Mr S Corless

As a school we sincerely hope you and your families are well and coping with the situation we all find ourselves in at what would have been, under normal circumstances, the end of term.

On behalf of our SLT, I want to acknowledge the work of my colleagues at St Alban's, teachers, leaders and support staff. I want also to thank you and our students for calmly getting on with things at a time of great uncertainty. As time goes on some things are becoming clearer, but we are no nearer any certainty about the duration of the closure or any arrangements for relaxing the restrictions we are working under.

Ofqual have now released their guidance regarding the grades for Year 11 and Year 13 students and we will forward the letter from Ofqual to each student in due course. St Alban's teachers have already been considering provision for providing grades for each student, so we are in a good position. In addition to the grades, we will be required to put students in rank order within subjects. This is not something for you or your son/daughter to be concerned about. We will use a variety of in-school data gained through classwork, homework and assessments including exams as a starting point. Once we have collected all student data we will study the tables carefully to ensure that any anomalies are dealt with on an individual basis, so please rest assured that we will do our utmost to ensure that grades and the rank ordering are a fair reflection of each student's work up to this point.

There is nothing further that students need to do regarding their grades.

Ofqual insists very clearly that schools **must not** discuss or share grades with students or parents before results are released in the summer. Please do not, therefore, contact teachers for any information about this process. Mr Baker our Head teacher and as Head of Centre is required to sign a declaration when the grades are submitted to the effect that confidentiality has been maintained, so this is what we must enforce.

Below is a link to questions and answers produced by Ofqual should you have any queries about this process. The results for both A Level (13 August) and GCSE (20 August) will be available from St Alban's on the published dates as planned. If you require any further assistance, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

God Bless and stay safe,

Mr Corless
Deputy Head teacher