



Contact

The Newsletter of St Alban's Catholic High School

Autumn Term 2020
Edition No. 1

Comments from the Headteacher

Matt Baker

I am so proud of the way the students and staff have faced the challenges this term. Starting back in September, I am sure that we felt apprehensive. Now eight weeks further on, yes, we have faced challenges as we adjust to the rules and regulations – but the school has returned to learning. Remarkably, the attendance has increased over the term to near to our normal levels, and learning can take center stage again! To keep this up next term, could we all encourage students to wash their hands regularly, and follow the guidance of masks and outstanding behaviour that we have laid down, for the well-being of all.

As you know, we are making further adjustments to the curriculum that ensure more specialist rooms are available for GCSE, as well as providing more covered space for breaks and lunches. Please take time to look at the email from earlier in the week, as it details the start and finishing times, as well as where students will have lessons, break and lunch.

I conclude with a prayer:

In times of difficulty, Lord,
We appreciate the support and encouragement of others.
In better times, we feel stronger and more secure, so remind us in challenging times
to co-operate with other people and look out for the needs of others,
being ready to offer a smile, a word, a lending hand.

Amen





St Alban's
Catholic High School



Clare, Countess of Euston
H.M. Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk

Lieutenancy Office
Endeavour House
Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2BX

29th September 2020

Yours Mr Baker

I am writing to you today as Her Majesty The Queen's personal representative in Suffolk, to thank you for the contribution you have made, and are continuing to make, during the extraordinary and difficult circumstances caused by the Covid-19 crisis.

The innovation, collaboration, courage, and selflessness shown by so many across the County during this desperate time has been truly inspirational and uplifting. Our Schools, our Teachers and Support Staff have set a shining example of all that is best in Suffolk.

The High Sheriff of Suffolk and I feel privileged to award you all the Lord Lieutenant's special Certificate of Merit for your remarkable contribution.

With the very greatest gratitude and appreciation,

Clare Euston

Clare, Countess of Euston
H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk

Welcome

This term we have welcomed a number of new staff to the school

Mrs Barber – Head of English

Mr Blackwell – Teaching Assistant

Miss Lichota – Teaching Assistant

Mr Toombs – Sixth Form Pastoral Lead



Key Upcoming Diary Dates

Tuesday 3 November	All students return from half-term break
Tuesday 10th November 6-6.45pm	Sixth Form Virtual Taster Event
Wednesday 18 November	Edmund House Charity Day
W/C Monday 30th November	Year 11 Pre Public Exams

School Calendar and Non-Student Days

Autumn Term

Half-Term Holiday: 26th-30th October 2020
End of Term: Friday 18 December 2020

Spring Term

Begins: Tuesday 5 January 2021
Half-Term Holiday: 15-19 February 2021
End of Term: Friday 26 March 2021

Summer Term

Begins: Monday 12 April 2021
May Bank Holiday: Monday 3 May 2021
Half-Term Holiday: 31 May-4 June 2021
End of Term: Friday 16 July 2021

Non-Student Days

Monday 02 November 2020
Monday 04 January 2021
Monday 19 July 2021
Tuesday 20 July 2021

Confusion often occurs with families with students in other local schools who operate different terms dates and different non student days. Please note that we finish this academic year on **Friday 16 July 2021**.



Chaplaincy Update

Miss Edwards, Lay Chaplain

On Wednesday 30 September, Botolph House hosted our first House Charity Day. The day began with a Service which students attended in their Form rooms. Then each form ran a fundraising activity for their Year 'bubble'. Bart, Botolphs' House Captain was astounded at the amount that was raised over £200 and he writes 'a huge thank you to everyone in the House for their efforts particularly Year 7BX who raised a staggering £70. I mustn't forget to thank parents for their support too.'

The money will be split between our three school charities: CAFOD, St Vincent de Paul and MIND and will make a huge difference to the lives of many people across our world.

A HUGE THANK YOU



On Wednesday 7th October Annabella, our Head Girl and CAFOD leader along with Josmy led a CAFOD Assembly, via zoom for St Mark's School on the theme of Harvest for all. It was well received from the pupils and has inspired lots of discussion on fundraising for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Year 7 Classes have been coming into the Chapel to learn about the Mass and it is hoped that they will celebrate a class Mass in the near future.



Sixth Form News

Mrs Morris - Head of Sixth Form

The Sixth Form at St Alban's

In the last few weeks our Sixth Form leavers have started University courses across the UK and internationally, including music at Cambridge, medicine at Imperial College London and Birmingham, textile design at Norwich University of Arts, Architecture at Plymouth, Law at Manchester and many more. An impressive 87% gained a place at their first choice University, and 57% have entered STEM based courses. In particular this year we have a number of female students pursuing STEM courses, studying motor sport engineering at Oxford Brookes and studying electrical engineering at Loughborough for example, which we hope our younger students will find aspirational.

We are very proud of our 2020 Sixth Form results which are testimony to the hard work of our students. Our value added progress was **outstanding**, this means that individuals regardless of their starting points made excellent progress. Overall this summer 34% of A Level grades were A*-A and 61% of all grades were A*-B, individual achievements were from Shirley (A*, A*, A, A), Simon (A*, A*, A, C), Tom (A*, A*, A*, A), Andria (A*, A*, A*, A, A) and Marnie (A*, A*, A, A) who secured places at a number of Russell group universities. We congratulate all our young people for their enthusiasm and determination to succeed and thank the subject tutors for their inspiration and commitment.

We wish all our young people every blessing as they now begin the next chapter of their lives and look forward to hearing about their future achievements. To find out more about what our past students are doing now, or to join our alumni please visit our Sixth Form website <https://www.st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk/sixthform>

Our Sixth Form application for September 2021 is now available on our website and we welcome applications from both our own Year 11 students and external students. On Tuesday 10th November we are inviting prospective students and their families to join our LIVE Virtual Open Evening event on YouTube (6pm – 6.45pm) during which you will get to meet some of our current students and ask them questions about studying and life in Sixth Form. Here is the link to the scheduled event <https://youtu.be/Ng6pYhJdIY>.



Meeting our Sixth Form Student Leadership as they reflect on their first half term.



Hello, my name is Clive Sam, and I am the Head Boy here at St. Alban's. I am currently studying Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Philosophy at A level and I hope to go on to do Medicine next year. I love to read, eat good food and learning about different cultures. Lockdown was an interesting experience and although the teachers provided plenty of support and encouragement throughout, it just was not the same sitting at home on my laptop. It is seeing my friends, learning from teachers face-to-face and being in school, that allows me to thrive. I am glad to be back.

The newly formed Sixth Form council have already started to make exciting plans for the upcoming year. Our role is to take on feedback from the student body and act upon it, to improve our school. In recognition of the strange times that we find ourselves in, there is a greater focus on making sure the whole of the school can engage with the council and we are discussing ways that it can be more representative of lower years. The council meets monthly and the latest agendas have included: securing a new water fountain in the Sixth Form, food availability for all year groups and how we use free periods in Sixth Form timetables. We are making a difference, and we will continue to work to better St Alban's.

Hello, my name is Annabella Labella, and I am the Head Girl here at St. Alban's. I am currently studying Psychology, Art, and Biology at A-Level in addition to my AS Level in core maths. I am also completing an EPQ qualification centered around investigating 'How gender influences a diagnosis within the autistic spectrum' as I plan to study psychology at university. I work part time at a retail store in town and enjoy spending my free time looking after the many different animals I own. It is great to finally be back at school and to a somewhat 'normal' routine – with the addition of the iconic mask wearing, floor mapping, social bubbles and the handy sanitiser stations outside of each classroom! This is certainly a new experience for us all but it's nice to see everyone playing their part in making sure the school stays and feels safe.



It is also great to see our lovely new year 12 students settling into the Sixth Form. The responses given by students about their Wednesdays off have been extremely positive! Many have commented on how productive their extra day has been. It has been a great time to consolidate notes, finish up on any incomplete homework and do some reading ahead in preparation for future lessons. They are now actively looking and applying for work experience - thinking about their future plans. Year 12 seems to have gotten off to a very good start!



Hello, my name is Oliver Johnson, and I am the Deputy Head Boy here at St. Alban's. I have been at St Alban's since Year 7 and I am now studying Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Chemistry. I will go on to study Physics at university, for which I have already received offers from some of the universities that I have applied to. In my spare time I enjoy playing the flute, sailing competitively and volunteering with my local Cub group. In the build-up of our return to school, I was unsure as to how the school would manage to safely function with all year groups back. Coming back, I was amazed at how well the timetabling has been done to keep our bubbles apart - I hardly see the other years at all! I love no longer being alone in my room all day.

On Monday the 5th of October, Daniella Lord led an assembly for Year 13 about finance - one of the more daunting aspects of going away to university. Daniella took us through the two student loans that we can get, explained what we can expect from each, and where we go to apply for them. As always, Daniella was happy to answer all our questions, and it was true for everybody that we were much more comfortable with the idea of finance leaving the assembly than before it. At the end, as it was her last day working with us as a Higher Education Champion, we all said goodbye and a massive thank you for all the help and advice Daniella had given us since Year 9.

For Year 13, this term is dominated by four letters - 'UCAS'. Since we returned in September, many of us have been in an almost endless loop of drafting and redrafting our Personal Statements until they reach perfection. Helping us to get out of this loop are our teachers, who have assisted massively by suggesting edits and giving us advice about our statements. On top of this teachers have been doing an amazing job of writing our references, which are equally important for our UCAS applications. Our Oxbridge and Medical School applicants are now finalising their applications as we draw near to the early applicant deadline, whilst many others are making good progress and will be looking to submit their applications in the coming weeks. The apprehension of waiting for decisions and the excitement I felt seeing my first offers is something that I look forward to going through and celebrating with my friends and peers once they start receiving offers too.

Hi, I'm Charlotte Codd and I am the Deputy Head Girl of St. Albans. I am currently studying A-Level Business, Music and English Literature alongside an EPQ and Cambridge Pre-U qualification and will hopefully further pursue a degree course in Business Marketing with Management or Business Law at University. In my free time I attend a theatre group where we perform up and down the country: singing, dancing, acting...the whole lot! Returning to the school in Year 13 built up a lot of apprehension regarding our A-Levels and the future decisions that may affect them. The school has provided us with after





school lessons and revision sessions to fill us with confidence regardless of the form that A-Levels may take.

Within the Sixth Form we have a team of House Captains who represent and support the six houses of the school. Every two weeks the house captains and senior student leadership team come together to discuss the house charity days. We try to come up with fun games and activities for the students to get involved in while raising money for our chosen charities: SVP,

Mind and CAFOD. During lockdown, zoom quizzes became highly popular, uniting friends and family around the country when we couldn't see them face-to-face. At the end of September, I released a fun quiz for all of the forms in the school to take part in. These monthly quizzes test the forms general knowledge as they compete for the highest score within their year and the rest of the school. This has brought form groups together through working as team to complete the quizzes and have been especially effective for the new Year 7 form groups as a way of getting to know one another.

The upcoming terms are normally a time of excitement with festive events and fairs, this year we want to try and emulate that same spirit - even if we cannot do it in the usual fashion. It is important that despite our situation, we do not forget to have a bit of fun.

We look forward to serving the school and making the most of the year ahead. Thank you for your time and we hope you stay safe.

Best regards,

Senior Student Leadership Team – Clive, Annabella, Oliver, and Charlotte



Uniform and Appearance

As we continue through the school year, a reminder to all of our expectations on student uniform and appearance:

Our school uniform is as follows:

The following items can be ordered directly from Coes:

School blazer with badge*
Striped School tie with badge*
Dark green v-necked long-sleeve jumper
Tailored mid grey school trousers*

These items can be purchased from any retail outlet:

Plain white shirt*
Black shoes*, not suede or fabric and no high boots
Black/grey socks
Waterproof coat for bad weather
Items marked with an * are compulsory.

Items that are not permitted are listed below:

- ✗ Skirts
- ✗ Make-up (make-up natural to the student's complexion and skin tone is acceptable. However, any make up that does not comply with this such as lipstick, eye-shadow, eye-liner and false eyelashes are not allowed).
- ✗ Nail varnish
- ✗ Extreme hairstyles, including brightly coloured hair
- ✗ Nose studs
- ✗ Eyebrow studs
- ✗ Earrings that are not a simple gold or silver stud
- ✗ Any jewellery that is not a cross
- ✗ Trainers, unless for PE
- ✗ Shoes with logos on
- ✗ Cord or denim trousers
- ✗ Skinny or tight trousers
- ✗ **Hoodies**
- ✗ Hats including baseball caps



Mobile Phones and Headphones

Mobile phones are, for many of our students, a vital communication tool to ensure that they get to and from school safely. The ability to communicate with you as parents and carers is important and we recognise this. The rules for the use of these devices are that they should **be put away and switched off when they arrive at the school grounds**. If a student needs to get in contact with home there are mechanisms in place, either through the school office or Pastoral support staff.

There are times where mobile phones may be used for educational purposes in lessons, and in this event, it is at the discretion of the class teacher if they feel that this will enhance learning. **At 3.15pm mobile phones are permitted to be used again** as this may help with arranging pick-ups and lifts. Headphones can also become a distraction and now seem to be something of a fashion item, which can be very expensive. Again, once on the school grounds these are not permitted for use and should be kept away in students' bags.

Attendance

Mr Moulding, Attendance and Admissions Officer

I know that some parents are concerned when their children are ill at the moment that it might be due to Coronavirus. Fortunately, here, so far, the vast majority of absences for coughs and temperatures have been due to other seasonal bugs. However, this has led to some parents erring on the side of caution but we encourage you to minimise absences and if you receive a negative Covid-19 test result then please send your child back to school as soon as possible. We find that most children can cope with a day sitting in a warm classroom with a minor snuffle, headache or period-related discomfort after some non-prescription medication in the morning.

Attendance at St Alban's is high. We are proud of this and work hard to maintain it because usually the students who achieve their best in exams are those with good attendance.

Term-time holidays, trips abroad to visit family, extended school holidays, etc. will **not** be authorised by the school. Unauthorised absences result in the issuing of fines to parents. A second such absence will not lead to a second fine but a referral for prosecution.

Regular attendance here means attending every school day, unless agreed otherwise by the school.

Be wary of a report on Mondays by your child of a minor complaint such as a headache or stomach upset. We have up to three times as many absences on Mondays as the other days. Often these seem more related to a desire to extend the weekend than genuine illness.



Year 7

Miss Bright – Head of Year 7

Well done to all our Year 7 students for settling in and becoming a strong part of our school community. To date the Year 7s have collected 2362 house points- a truly remarkable achievement! Congratulations go to members of both Botolph (BX) and Avila (SB) forms for arranging some great fundraising activities for their charity days helping to raise vital funds for our three chosen charities; CAFOD, St Vincent de Paul and Suffolk Mind.

There are many ways which the Year 7 students can contribute the wider school and take on a role of responsibility, even with the current safety restrictions. These include being a House Representative (helping to organise charity and house events), being a Student Voice Representative (sharing the form voice to contribute to the development of the school) and



launching after half term . . . an exclusive role to Year 7 – Break/Lunch Ambassador. These break and lunch ambassadors will represent the year group by helping to identify positive contributions to the cohort i.e. being an inclusive friend, being kind to others, litter picking etc. and bring concerns to my attention. The ambassadors will be rewarded with house points and hot chocolates for their dedication to the role. I look forward to working with the ambassadors after half-term!

The students are really enjoying the added freedom of coming to secondary school including our proximity to the local shops! As the weeks have passed, we have noticed that there are many students making a trip to the shop in the morning and buying lots of sweets, crisps and sugary drinks and consuming these before school begins. We would like the students to be mindful of the both the quantity of these items being consumed but also the negative impact these can have on focus and learning, your support in this matter is appreciated. **Just to confirm that students should not be bringing fizzy/cafeinated drinks into school and if seen, will be confiscated and disposed of.**

As the friendships within the year group are becoming stronger, a reminder that students should be limiting contact with each other (no hugging, games involving touching etc.) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please discuss this with your child and encourage the regular washing of hands and the use of sanitiser throughout the school day.



Allotment Update

Mrs Boosey, Head of Learning Support



The school allotment has suffered from a lack of attention during the past challenging months. There are jobs to be completed, painting the fence, fixing wire netting and general maintenance. In addition, there is produce – we need to be planning and planting and also shortly harvesting pumpkins!

We would love to hear from you if you would be able to offer any time to help maintain our allotment area. Contact Judy Boosey