



SPALDING GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headmaster: S M Wilkinson BSc

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Dear Parents

I am writing further to the Prime Minister's announcement of Monday evening. I had anticipated needing to write to you in response to a change of circumstances; I had not anticipated that happening quite so soon.

In a new national lockdown, schools have been closed to all but a few students, and will be the case until at least half-term. While this is necessary, it saddens me. I firmly believe the best place for students is in school; fortunately, compared to March last year, we are in a much stronger position in terms of being able to maintain education and contact with students – our advances in remote teaching and learning mean that provision will be incomparably favourable to that in the first lockdown.

The adjustments that I detail here will take effect from next Monday, 11 January.

Teaching and Learning

As has already been set up for this week and next, it is the intention that all lessons across the next six weeks will be taught 'live' via Teams, and all students will be expected to 'dial in' to their usual timetable (although there will be a couple of small adjustments made to the timings of the day – see below). A new Go4Schools entry has been set up, and teachers will record absence from lessons in that way. In order that parents are automatically alerted to the absence, the entry will carry a negative point. This may mean that on a full day of absence, a student accrues -6 points; once we have confirmed genuine reasons for absence, these negative entries will be deleted.

Students will need to be able to access a suitable device, and, as Mr Brooks asked in his recent survey of parents, if any parent feels lack of access to technology will cause a problem they should contact communications@spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk. To be able to fully engage with this process, the device the student uses should have both camera and microphone capability; again, any parent who has concerns about that is invited to contact the School at the same email address.

The School Day

The teaching day will operate slightly differently. Firstly, although lessons will remain timetabled at their usual 50-minute duration, each lesson will only run for 45 minutes, with the last five minutes being "lesson changeover" – an opportunity for students to take a break from the screen and re-focus for the next lesson. Lessons will be a mix of taught material and student work and, it is expected that, in many lessons, students will be able to look away from the screen and engage in non-computer work. Secondly, as students are not on site, there is no need for a staggered end to the day; therefore, period 6, for all Years, will end at 3.10pm.

Pastoral Support

Tutor Time (10.35 – 11.00am) will not operate as normal in the short-term. There will be Assemblies and 'keeping in touch' meetings between tutors and students, the details of which will be communicated to you by your son's/daughter's Head of Year in due course. In the meantime, and otherwise, Tutor Time is a further opportunity for students to take a break from their screen.

Additional support for students is available via the SGSWellbeing@spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk email address, which the Additional Needs Team will continue to monitor should parents and students have any particular wellbeing or safeguarding concerns.

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Homework

We have decided that, during the lockdown period, we will lessen our expectations on homework. It is important that students, for their wellbeing, take the evening to relax and to have that social contact (albeit virtually) with their friends, which they currently are not able to get at school. As such, for Years 7-9, homework will only be to ensure that they have managed to complete the work that was set during lessons during that day. For Years 10 and 11, on top of that, there may be a little additional prep work set for the next lesson, but nothing substantial. Sixth Formers should expect to continue to receive a good amount of independent work to complete, in recognition of the number of Private Study periods that they have during the day.

Examinations

While it has been widely reported in the news that summer examinations are cancelled, it is important to recognise that does not mean that the grade has been cancelled. We do not yet know what the alternative arrangements will be – there may be some formal examinations, there may be Centre Assessed Grades, or there may be a hybrid system. If there are formal examinations, the work students do now matters; if grades are going to be decided by schools, the work students do now matters. The message is clear, and I hope that no student in Year 11 or 13 (or indeed Year 10 or 12, given the potential future impact of this additional period of school closure) will see this as an opportunity to ease back.

Communication with home

During this period, in addition to the 'keeping in touch' meetings previously mentioned, Heads of Year will keep in weekly contact with students – there will be a Year Assembly every fortnight and, in the alternate week, a Bulletin sent to all students. We also want to keep in contact with parents too – we will be suspending our usual Newsletter, but replacing it with a weekly communication bringing you up to date with any developments.

The School site is, in essence, closed. If a parent needs to come to school for any reason, I ask that this is done by prior arrangement. Contact with the School can be made through enquiries@spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk. Email is the preferred method of communication during this lockdown period; however, the School will operate a limited telephone service, and anyone wishing to contact the School in this manner will need to do so between 8-11am.

Finally, we will be sending out a short survey half way through this term to get a sense of how well our arrangements are working. It may be that we need to make further adjustments, in which case we will, of course, keep parents informed.

Yours sincerely



S M Wilkinson
Headmaster