

# SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

## ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Dear Parents,

Thank you again for continued support during a time that is challenging and uncertain for all of us. Having digested the directions in yesterday's announcement by the Secretary of State and spoken with staff, we are ready to explain the framework for our operations over the next few weeks. We do not yet know the duration of the school 'closure' and will seek to keep parents informed as and when the situation changes.

The reason for the 'closure' is to protect pupils and staff from an unwarranted level of infection and transmission of Corona Virus, recognising also that schools would have found themselves with an increased number of staff absences – due to illness or self-isolation – making normal provision ever more difficult to sustain.

The school will therefore be closed to most pupils and staff for the time being. The majority of our staff will be working from home, fulfilling their normal professional duties as best they can.

However, as you will have realised the 'closure' announcement requires the school to remain 'open' to provide meals and supervised activity for the children of 'key workers', for those in receipt of Free School Meals, classified as Pupil Premium or who are supported with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP). We are awaiting a Cabinet Office announcement regarding the definition of 'key worker'; **but for all pupils in these categories, and only these pupils, we will be providing the offer of breakfast, lunch and supervised activity on site.** This offer will apply on weekdays and will include the Easter holidays. We will be writing to all parents tomorrow, with an electronic reply form, asking that you confirm if your child is within one of the defined categories and whether your son or daughter will be taking up this offer. Since the entire process of closure is intended to limit social contact, we must restrict this provision to those who qualify and genuinely need it. Please be aware that you may be required to provide verification of 'key worker' status.

School will close from the end of Friday (3.30 pm finish). We have been preparing for a closure across a number of weeks. On Monday, teaching staff will be finalising those preparations and configuring the resources that we will then be using to sustain home-based learning.

**From next Tuesday, every pupil will have a daily programme of learning activities provided.** This will continue during term-time. The activities will be assigned following the normal school timetable pattern. All the tasks will be posted on Show My Homework so they can be viewed online by pupils and parents. We are conscious that home computer facilities may be limited and are often shared; so we will be trying our best to ensure there is a good variety of assignments, and that not all are screen-based. One of the advantages of Show My Homework is that it can readily be viewed on a smartphone, so tasks will often not need any other online access. Some assignments will be submitted for assessment and feedback; many will require careful self-review and checking. Pupils will be able to communicate with their teachers, if needs be, using Show My Homework, their school email account or Microsoft Teams. (These channels of communication are monitored and recorded, for the safeguarding of pupils and staff.)



Our team of classroom-based support staff, under the direction of our SENDCo, will be maintaining regular online contact with those pupils who usually have additional adult support in school.

Inevitably, if we do have some staff illness, there will be days when some subjects may not post an activity; but we are aiming to limit this through shared planning across staff teams.

Our recommendation is that pupils go to Show My Homework to view their tasks every morning, plan the order in which they will be completed, and do 'school work' through until lunchtime. We know some pupils will be unwell, at times, and accept that this may delay the completion of activities; but they can and should all be done later, if needs be. We will need the help of parents to check – not just ask – that tasks have been completed, as required, especially those that can't be submitted electronically. So long as pupils manage to avoid illness, and are not subject to any quarantine restrictions, we would also encourage everyone in our community to sustain a regular pattern of physical exercise: cycling, walking or running.

The closure is, of course, an excellent opportunity to promote other worthwhile learning beyond just the school tasks that are set. It will be a chance to read books, to practise musical instruments, to learn new skills (in the kitchen, perhaps), or to explore other new aspects of learning, including beginning to investigate more advanced levels of study.

I would urge all parents to plan for, and regulate, the activity of your children during the 'closure'; in particular, but not only, limiting screen-time and providing alternative and creative options. A regular pattern: "school work, lunch, physical exercise, free-time" may well help.

Pupils in Years 7-10 and 12 will need to approach the period of 'closure' knowing that they will be returning in a few weeks, or months, and must be ready to resume their studies as if there had been no interruption. The work that is being set will be vital for this.

Pupils in Year 11 need to ensure they complete any unfinished GCSE content; revise and practise their subject knowledge and skills; sustain their learning, particularly in any subjects that they intend to pursue to A-level; and begin to explore the first steps of AS content knowledge for Year 12.

Year 13, likewise, will want to secure a level of expertise and knowledge across all their A-level subjects and position themselves well for the transition to further study, apprenticeships or employment.

We do not yet know how examination grades will be determined for GCSE, AS or A-level candidates.

Please share the details of this letter with your son or daughter and talk it through. Every year group will have an assembly presentation tomorrow, so they too will know what we are planning.

I will write further tomorrow and would ask, again, that you give us time to find the answers before you ask the questions!

Yours sincerely



Robin M Bevan  
Headteacher