

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Robin M Bevan MA MEd PhD FRSA



April 16th, 2020

Dear Parents,

First, may I once again thank you for the many and varied messages of support and appreciation that we have received: I do hope that the holiday period has been as enjoyable as possible for you all. We all recognise the many challenges that families are facing and admire the sustained contributions of the very many individuals – public and hidden – who are sustaining vital services for us all.

The school is committed to making generous, appropriate and relevant contributions to the national effort in support of the NHS and others who are working exceptionally hard - and at significant risk - in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although we have not widely publicised our actions, at an early stage we provided all residual Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) held in the school science department for use in the NHS. We have also offered other items of PPE to key workers who need additional protection. Our stocks are, however, very limited.

A number of schools nationally are producing low volumes of PPE, especially face protectors (visors). These efforts are to be commended. It is, in contrast, striking and disappointing that very few commercial organisations - with extensive production facilities - have stepped into the breach.

Unfortunately, the equipment that we have at our school that would be needed to produce such items is not designed for heavy sustained use: in particular there is inadequate ventilation for the continuous cutting of plastic sheeting. In the circumstances our considered view is that any attempt to assist in this way would be very limited and potentially cause more harm than good.

We will however continue to explore every avenue to be of assistance: offering active and constructive support as and when we can.

In the meantime, I am immensely grateful to all those staff members who have volunteered for our on-site supervision rota throughout the Easter closure period; and, equally, to those members of support staff who continue to work on all those vital functions that are essential to our continued provision.



Remote learning

On Monday 20th April, our provision for remote learning will resume. There will be appropriate '45 minute' tasks set, each day, following the normal school timetable pattern.

Valuable learning activities – both consolidation of prior learning and relevant new material – will continue to be provided for Years 11 and 13 until 6th May, when 'study leave' would ordinarily have commenced. This does not prevent students in those year groups using their time, beyond this, to look ahead to the subjects and topics that they will be commencing in the Autumn.

Prior to the Easter break, the vast majority of our pupils followed a good daily routine during the school week: logging-in to ShowMyHomework, at a sensible time, in the morning – completing the day's tasks, usually by lunchtime, then enjoying physical activity and free-time. It is not surprising to see high levels of success and progress with those following this approach. We have set out to make the pattern and duration of tasks manageable and motivating. We would ask for your continued support in maintaining an appropriate daily 'rhythm' for school days.

Some, but not all, tasks will be submitted by pupils for review or marking. It does however matter that all tasks are completed with genuine determination and a focus on 'maximising learning'.

Exam grades for GCSE, AS and A-level

We have carefully reviewed the guidance from OfQual regarding the process that will be used to determine GCSE, AS and A-level grades. Parents and pupils may wish to read the OfQual letter to students: [available here](#). The school will apply the relevant procedures and submit for OfQual's consideration, for each individual in each subject, grade information that is consistent with the '*highest grade that the candidate had a realistic chance of securing: based on prior assessed tasks and tests*' – in this way, there will be no detriment to any individual. OfQual have been very clear that this grade information will not be shared with students or parents; and that any attempt to influence the school's submissions may be seen as 'exam malpractice'.

As it stands, the only proposed route for appeal – if a student is dissatisfied with a grade ultimately awarded by OfQual – will be through entry to a formal written examination in the Autumn. The details have not yet been published.

We know we can be assured of parental support in administering this process.

Return to 'normal' school attendance

There has been considerable speculation in the media regarding the re-opening of schools, not least as other countries across Europe have made their initial steps in this direction. In the absence of a published plan or clear national leadership announcements, the void will be filled with private opinions with varying levels of merit. England has amongst the highest class sizes, lowest staffing ratios, and most densely filled school buildings in Europe: it will simply not be possible to follow, for example, the German or Danish approaches.

In this context, it is also important to remember that schools have not closed: we continue to provide supervision on-site for the children of key-workers and others in need, including doing so throughout the Easter holiday, alongside the programme of remote learning activities. Secondly, schools will – of course – resume normal attendance in the weeks or months ahead; but we don't know when!

It does seem perverse to accelerate the resumption of normal school attendance, for as long as social distancing remains a central plank of the national response to limit the transmission of infection. There is also a reasonable duty to protect vulnerable family members of pupils and staff, as well as all the members of our own school community.

I anticipate that any return will be phased or staggered and will probably take place before the Summer holiday. We will be well-prepared for any such arrangement and will keep parents informed, as and when there are confirmed details. I hope it will be sooner rather than later!

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Bevan', with a small flourish at the end.

Robin M. Bevan
Headteacher