

Friday 20th March 2020

Dear Parents and carers,

What a week. I don't think any of us envisaged that the coronavirus would have such a drastic impact on our community in such a short period of time. As I write there is speculation that London may be forced to go into lockdown and we are still not sure about what is going to happen to GCSE and A level grades for our year 10, 11, 12 and 13 students.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that all the adults in the Academy and I were devastated at the cancellation of the summer exams; simply because we know the years of effort that our young people (and their dedicated teachers and parents) have put into them. Yesterday a number of year 11 came to school to pick up past papers and wanted to carry on working towards them, full of questions and concerns. Over the next few days and weeks we will do all we can to answer those questions and try to keep everything going as 'normal' as we can (although normal seems to change each day).

As you will see from the website, we are planning not to be open as a full school community until September. From the news it is clear that the peak infection of the coronavirus will be reached during the summer term and so this extended closure seems both likely and sensible. So what does this mean for our students? We are going to have to work together to help them work from home. As parents and carers, you will need to give them the structure to their day, usually provided by school: time to study, time to be physically active, time to rest and also time to still be teenagers in these challenging times (the [FAQ's on the website](#) has some suggestions). They shouldn't be out in groups and, if unwell, should be away from others for 14 days. We will set work, mark work and do all we can to support you, although this may not always be easy, especially as the Academy will be operating with a skeleton staff for the foreseeable future (we won't be able to answer phones or respond to voicemails for example).

What can you expect in terms of work

The teaching staff have been setting a lot of work! This is all on Smarthomework and should be done between now and Easter - please tell your son or daughter that it doesn't need to all be done in one day! We won't set work over the Easter holiday and then I have asked staff to do the following:

- **Year 7 and Year 8** - continue to work through the 3cert. Set work that is as close as possible to what we would be doing at school. Focus on numeracy and literacy skills. Get the students to read books and, when the BBC starts broadcasting them, watch education programmes on TV.
- **Year 8 options** will still go ahead as planned - we will be in touch with year 8 students and their parents and will attempt to do telephone options meetings with you. More will come about this after Easter.
- **Year 9** - continue to go through the first year of GCSE teaching ensuring that the students have the skills and understanding needed for the course ahead. We advise students to use TV programmes, books and both GCSEPod and SAM learning to help. We may even try to match them up with a year 11 student to do some peer teaching!
- **Year 10** - this year group will be sitting GCSE exams next year and so need to be working hard. We have asked staff not to teach new content but to cover what has already been done so that students can consolidate their learning. Expect past papers, tasks around making revision

material (therefore, covering the content again) and lots of tasks using GCSEPod and online tools as well as watching educational materials.

- **Year 11** - whilst they may not have exams, they do have A levels and other education coming up from September. They also need to be functioning citizens! We are planning to use this time as an opportunity to cover areas that the national curriculum doesn't usually allow us to touch upon.. Expect requests to be peer tutors, lessons around interesting topics and books that weren't on the GCSE syllabus, functional maths around the stock market, books and literature that our teachers find interesting and lots of preparation for A levels. Study mustn't stop now! We won't be setting work after the May bank holiday for year 11.
- **Year 12** - they need to be working hard! They will be doing A level exams and will have to apply for university in the summer. Students who can maximise on this time will be in the strongest position when that time comes. Teachers will be setting work and essays, marking and feeding back and doing all they can to keep things as normal as possible. We may also ask them to be peer tutors if they have the time.
- **Year 13** - whilst we don't yet know how grades will be given, we do expect any course that has a controlled assessment component to still be assessed as normal. This means that students will have to complete this work to a high standard and for the set deadline. We will also retain original copies of mock papers as evidence if we are asked to make teacher predictions. Staff will continue to set work for year 13 until all the work on the syllabus is completed. We would recommend that year 13 continue to prepare for their university course and do reading around the subjects they are interested in.

GCSE and A level exams

As outlined above, we are not yet sure what the process for exams will be. We will find out today and expect it to be a combination of teacher predictions and mock examination results. We also think that the government will put in place statistical modelling to ensure that schools can't over or under predict. Once we know more we will be in touch. To give you some reassurance, our predictions for year 11 and 13 have historically proven to be fairly accurate at this time of year and normally what we predict in the upcoming progress checks turn out to be very similar to the students' examination results. I would like to add a special thank you to all the year 11 students that have written to their teachers to explain why they should get all 9 grades; they brought a smile to our face in a time of sadness.

Key workers and school opening

When I last wrote to you last we had 17 staff self isolating; the number is now 33. We have no indication that any of them have coronavirus but they are following government guidance. With so many staff out it was the right decision, albeit a difficult one, to close for most year groups this week.

From Monday the academy is closed for all students, this includes the areas around the Academy and the local area - most students should be at home, observing social distancing and working. We will be open for students that we have deemed vulnerable and who we have invited in, and children of key workers. We will be offering supervised learning for those students with most of the day spent doing the online work that teachers have been setting - we will not be teaching new content. The gates will open at 8.20am and close at 8.35am. We will finish at 3.30pm. Due to the fact that the Academy will have

limited staff on site we will not allow entry after 8.35am. Our normal behaviour and uniform requirements will apply.

We will have a register of those students eligible to attend the Academy. Please do not, under any circumstances, send your child into school if they have not been invited and you have not had your key worker status verified by us.

Contacting the Academy

From Monday, we are officially closed. We will be turning the phone lines off as there will be no one on site to answer them and will not have staff contactable through reception. Your point of contact going forward are the heads of year, curriculum leaders, class teachers and learning coaches whose emails are all on the website. Please don't expect a response for 24 hours unless it is a safeguarding concern and also be aware that I have told staff that they only need to respond between 9am and 3.30pm. If you do have **safeguarding concerns** then please email support@chelsea-academy.org. Students can also use this address if they need help and support.

As I said at the start, we are moving into unprecedented times and we are working hard to support you and your sons and daughters as best we can. We may not get things completely right but please be assured that we are doing our absolute best. I am sure there will come a point when the frustrations of being isolated for so long and having school closed will cause tempers to fray, and frustrations to pour out. It is at that point that we must remember our Christian values of perseverance and forgiveness. Our motto is more appropriate than ever, not just for our young people, but all of us: Work hard, be kind, no excuses. This cohort of students will have been challenged like no other in our recent memory and it is up to all of us to ensure that when they look back on this period, they are proud of themselves.

Finally, things will get back to normal. Year 13 will get to university, year 11 will get a place doing something post 16 and the school community will come together again. Selfishly, I hope this is before the summer so I can say goodbye to you all properly!

Yours sincerely



Mr M Williams
Principal