



19th March 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian,

School Closure from 20th March 2020

Following advice issued by the government, Durham School will close to pupils this weekend apart from children of key workers or who are vulnerable children (arrangements for boarders currently still at school will follow separately.) I am writing to inform you about the procedures we have put in place for all pupils at the Senior School, and Mrs Harrod will write to those of you who have sons or daughters at Bow.

We believe that it is crucial that the education of our pupils is impacted as little as possible during the period of the school closure. Staff have been working hard to put resources in place to support the academic programme for our pupils and the arrangements for the period of school closure are as follows:

Lessons

We will endeavour to follow the normal school timetable as much as we can. Work will be provided for lessons and pupils will be expected to log on to the VLE at their normal lesson time to access and carry out this work. In the first instance, pupils should log on to the VLE and go to the "Classes" section to find the work; subject specific arrangements such as the use of Microsoft Teams will then take effect, as well as other subject-specific resources. More information on the resources which we will be using is below.

Pupils have access to two online platforms to assist with their work.

- The school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is accessible via the school website and then selecting the link *Staff/Pupil Login* in the top right-hand corner. Parents can also access the VLE via the adjacent link. The login details are the same as those required to access the school network. The login is the first part of the school email address (20XXJBloggs). All other resources will be made available via the VLE.
- Pupils will also require access to their school email account. This is of the form 20XXJBloggs@students.durhamschool.co.uk where 20XX is the year they would leave the school at the end of the Upper Sixth. For a pupil currently in Year 11, for example, this is 2022. Email is accessed via Microsoft Office 365 <https://login.microsoftonline.com> and pupils login using their full email address and password. There is a link to Office 365 on the VLE homepage.
- If pupils have problems accessing either facility they should email helpdesk@durhamschool.co.uk to ask for help or for a password to be reset. This service will be available every day during normal school hours. Pupils should *not use* the Microsoft 'I've forgotten my password' link.
- While using the VLE during timetabled lessons teachers will direct pupils to the relevant resources for that lesson.

Staff will set and mark work as usual. They will be accessible by email at lesson times to answer any student queries on the work as well as using videoconferencing software such as Teams or Zoom.



Deadlines for pupils to submit work will be set and pupils will be expected to meet them. We are very mindful that you will all have different circumstances at home and we do not underestimate the difficulties that may be caused by pupils not being able attend school. However, we are grateful to parents for their support in emphasising to their sons and daughters the importance of keeping to a set routine as far as possible and to keep working in their subjects.

If you need to contact a member of staff to discuss any aspect of the provision, then please use their email address which is of the form fristinitial.surname@durhamschool.co.uk (except for Mr Wright (History) who is sp.wright@). The staff list can be found on the school website <https://www.durhamschool.co.uk/our-people.asp>

Children of key workers and vulnerable children

In accordance with government advice, we intend to remain open for children in the above category both next week and then during the Easter holiday. Detailed arrangements will follow separately, and parents who would wish to avail themselves of this service are asked to complete a survey which will follow.

Pastoral care

In these stressful times we realise how important it is for staff members to keep in contact with pupils to monitor how they are coping with the challenges of the coronavirus. We will be using Teams to “meet” as houses and tutor groups on a regular basis and pastoral staff will keep parents informed on any issues which may arise.

Exam groups

The government announced yesterday that the timetabled public exams in May and June would now not take place. At the moment, there are no details on how GCSE or A Level grades may be awarded though it is likely to be on the basis of teacher assessment. It is possible that, when schools reopen, we are asked to carry out further assessments for pupils in Year 11 and 13 to help with the award of those grades. Pupils in those years therefore should carry on working and remote lessons for those groups will take place in the way outlined above.

Easter term

The government said yesterday that schools were closed until further notice. It is unlikely that term will resume on the scheduled date of April 20th. At the moment therefore, we are looking at deferring this date until May or even June. Clearly we need to see what happens nationally, but our aim would be to provide a full Summer term if we can. I appreciate that a change to term dates at this stage is not something we would ordinarily consider but these are not ordinary circumstances. As soon as we have any more information on this, we will write again.

Communication

We will continue to communicate with you in our usual ways throughout the school closure. As well as individual contact via email, the school telephone lines will be manned as usual and we will use text messaging, InTouch and the website/social media as and when necessary.



We will endeavour to update you next week once we have the systems outlined above in motion and we will reflect on any modifications necessary. Once again thank you for your understanding and support at this difficult time.

Yours faithfully,



K J McLaughlin
Headmaster

