

12th January 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. Please find below some key updates and information we would like to share with you.

Learning

In order to support those pupils who are unable to attend school at the moment, class teachers are setting work and ensuring it is sent home to parents for each subject, for each timetabled lesson. Teachers will continue to email parents directly each week with their lessons. If you have any queries regarding the work that has been set, please speak with the class teacher in the first instance. We really do appreciate that working at home will present a variety of challenges for your child and you. Working together, we will be able to make sure your child is supported.

Pupils who are unable to engage with online learning will be strongly encouraged to attend school so they do not fall behind in their learning.

There are a variety of additional online resources that can be used to support the learning of your child. These include:

- Mathematics
- Education City
- Charanga Music
- BBC Bitesize
- Oak National Academy

Resources on these platforms will support the work set by teachers. If you have any questions regarding work, please speak to the class teacher, who will be happy to help.

Access to digital technology

If you require assistance with an online learning resource please email Mr Weakley sweakley@stmarysbexhill.org. The school has been allocated a small number of devices from the government for pupils to use during this period. If you have issues accessing the internet during this period, again please contact Mr Weakley.

If you do not have an internet router at home, to support with online learning mobile phone companies have increased their data allowances. There are certain eligibility criteria for those providers who have signed up and not everyone will be eligible. All requests for additional data need to be made by the school to the DfE. Please contact Mr Weakley if you need additional mobile data to access to the internet to support learning.

GCSE Exams

By now you will be aware that the Government has announced that GCSE exams will not take place this summer.

The Department for Education stated: *'In these circumstances, we do not think it is possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly.'*

Although the situation is presently unclear on what will replace GCSE exams, teachers may be asked to give some sort of assessment to inform any grading for qualifications awarded. We will continue to update you as and when we receive more information from the DfE.

There is currently no updated guidance regarding BTECs and functional skills; when this is released we will update you.

Staff Availability

Teachers and therapists will continue to provide remote learning following our current schemes of work including BTEC and GCSE accreditation schemes of work, and therapy goals. Staff will remain available via email during normal school hours.

Communication

As we are currently unable to accommodate parents onsite we would like to remind you all that staff can be reached by email or telephone.

- If you have a query about a remote learning task, contact your child's class teacher
- If you have a query about your child's therapy goals/provision contact their therapist
- If you have a query about your child's annual review contact Mr Pollen SENCO apollen@stmarysbexhill.org.
- If you have safeguarding concerns contact our Designated Safeguarding Lead Gemma Martin gmartin@stmarysbexhill.org.

Wellbeing

We remain fully committed to supporting pupil and staff wellbeing. Please do get in touch with your child's class teacher or therapist if you require advice or support.

A list of wellbeing resources for young people for sharing is below:

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/> - on mental health wellbeing strategies
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/> - advice on their website and a phone and email support service
- <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/feelings> - a wealth of advice regarding emotional issues and general health
- <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/mental-health-advice-for-children-and-young-people> - mental health topics
- <https://papyrus-uk.org><<https://papyrus-uk.org/>> Papyrus is the suicide prevention charity who are there to help you if you feel you aren't coping (if you feel this way you must tell an adult you trust)

- <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/supernav/links> Youth Access have links to lots of organisations.

Please find a list of sources of support for carers and parents below:

- Mind provides information on mental distress plus ideas for self-care
<https://www.mind.org.uk>
- Samaritans are there to listen if you are feeling overwhelmed
<https://www.samaritans.org>
- CAMHS Sussex has advice on mental wellbeing for children and parents:
<https://sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/help-support>
- NHS information on Coronavirus <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Plus this advice from the Mental Health Foundation on protecting your mental health
health <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-duringcoronavirus-outbreak>

We are very aware the coming weeks will be stressful and challenging for us all and we are very grateful for your support in helping us to continue to provide education for your children. We hope that you and your families are able to stay safe and well during this period.

Yours sincerely



Natalie Edwards
Acting Principal