

17 April 2020

Learning and Teaching at St Dunstan's: Trinity Term 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families have had peaceful Easters. On behalf of the College, may I thank you and your children once again for your overwhelmingly supportive response to the remote learning programme that the College created before Easter. We seek to provide the best possible education we can under whatever regulatory and wider framework that we are required to operate within. That ambition and commitment remains just as strong now in this temporary covid-19 dominated context as it was when we were inspected by ISI under the normal and routine Independent Schools regulatory framework.

In this letter I have set out the educational plans, opportunities and expectations for the Trinity Term, which begins for your children on Tuesday 21st April after a staff inset day on Monday. These arrangements have been put together based on feedback from before Easter as well as our own research and knowledge of approaches being taken by other schools in the UK and beyond. We are also, of course, responding to a changing national context and ongoing government updates. The arrangements outlined here will be updated for the second half of term, or before if necessary. At the forefront of our planning remains always the short and long term education of your children.

Part 1: Trinity Term Remote Learning and Teaching (relevant for Years 7-13 inclusive)

The following guiding principles are being followed by the College:

- That staff, children and parents all value live interaction between expert teachers and students and want it to be maximised within our remote educational offering.
- That this priority must be balanced against the wellbeing risks associated with excessive and prolonged screen time for children and adults alike.
- That there are enhancements that can be made to the educational offering we trialled last term based on the feedback we have gathered.
- That since no single routine will consistently best suit every household's unique context, compassion and flexibility over what is expected from children and delivered by staff is necessary for us to remain the inclusive community we so proudly are.

The Structure of the School Day:

We will maintain the existing two week timetable with five periods per day that we are all used to, with the following adjustments:

1. Period 5 will now be from 1405-1500 instead of our normal timing of 1505-1600. This means our teaching day ends earlier and Forder or other co-curricular or supplementary activities will happen after 1500.

2. There will be a 10 minute interactive registration session via Microsoft Teams every day for every child. For Years 7-10 this will be between 0835 and 0845. For Years 11,12 and 13 this will be between 1350 and 1400. This is to ensure Tutors are available to children every day to check attendance and readiness for learning, to clarify any confusions over schedules, and to arrange any wide pastoral follow up as necessary. Daily pastoral contact and support will be invaluable in the weeks ahead.
3. On Tuesday (the first day of term), instead of the registration session outlined above and Period 1, there will be an extended and interactive Tutorial period from 0850 to 0940 for all students. Tutors will discuss and answer questions about the term's arrangements to ensure all students are able to move forwards with confidence.

To ensure our routine is sustainable over the coming weeks, the following will also happen:

1. There will be weekly pre-recorded assemblies, three pre-recorded section assemblies per half term, and weekly pre-recorded Head of Year messages.
2. Mr Gower is coordinating an ongoing co-curricular programme that will recognise and facilitate peer to peer interaction as a key aim, to support the kind of healthy social contact between the children that we all know is vital to maintain.
3. The Enrichment and Scholarship Coordinator (Miss Partridge) will advertise optional extra enrichment/scholarship projects that any student can engage with beyond their taught schedule. We encourage this strongly.
4. There will no longer be a separation of 'homework' from lesson tasks. Instead, the homework tasks functionality of Firefly will be used by teachers to set any task that is expected to be handed in for marking. This may be from a lesson or set as a homework. The intention is to avoid students being overloaded with tasks to complete simply because they are at home, but to focus task completion and task feedback on the tasks that have most educational impact (be they part of a lesson or not), alongside the championing of live interaction where possible.
5. Mindful of the educational experience of schools abroad who have been in lockdown for longer than the UK, and increasingly compelling educational research, we will build in deliberate non-screen time as follows:
 - a. Lesson work set for Wednesday afternoon (in the middle of the week) and Friday afternoon (after a full week of study) will not require screen use. We expect staff and students not to be on screen at these times. The only exception to this will be for Years 11 and 13, where Friday Period 5 is likely to remain interactive, but both year groups will have many other opportunities to be off screen across each week (see details of their course programmes later in this letter).
 - b. The target for interactive lessons for year groups with full weekly timetables (Y7-10) is at least 50%. They will not be on screen all of the time.
 - c. For Years 7-9, our younger students for whom the number of subjects is high and hence the intensity most great, we will remove from their timetables each fortnight one lesson in each creative subject (Art, Music, Drama, and DT). Enrichment activities or experiences will still be recommended by those departments, but not ones that require interaction or study on screen in those lesson times.

Our view is that the overall educational experience and likely benefit for the students from it will be enhanced by these steps and not the reverse.

Part 2: Efficiency of Learning and Teaching (relevant for Years 7-13 inclusive)

We have taken several steps in response to feedback to improve the clarity and consistency of information sharing around learning and teaching that will reduce ambiguities for all, and especially for students and staff with SEND.

1. Before each week starts, teachers will post in Firefly a summary of lessons for the week ahead. Normally this will be before the end of Sunday. For next week it will be before the end of Monday. This information will be in Firefly via Resources/SS Curriculum/Remote Lessons Trinity 2020/Your Year Group. Documents uploaded there will be identified as follows – Subject-Teacher Initials-Class/Week or Date/Period (eg History -AZJ -12C - 0421-0424 or 0421P3). The documents will follow a common format for all subjects and year groups for ease of use, will outline when lessons are interactive or independent study, key objectives, expected student output, enrichment opportunities, and required resources. This will enable all students, with parental support where helpful, to map out their week ahead and also to catch up on missed work more easily.
2. As per routine College policy, students should expect teacher written feedback in the form of WWW/EBI or SDC at least once per half term per teacher alongside the importance of the interactive lesson feedback.
3. The following clarity and consistency will be enacted for the various technological platforms in use, except in the event of more crashes (that we expect to be less frequent).
 - a. Lesson summaries will be located via the Firefly link outlined above.
 - b. Lesson resources will be saved in the Department pages of Firefly so they can be accessed there to help review/catching up.
 - c. All interactive lessons and tutorials will happen within Teams, where resources associated with that particular lesson will also be shared.
 - d. During interactive lessons, communication between teachers and students will be via the chat function or vocally if/when a teacher invites discussion.
 - e. All student work for submission and teacher feedback will be via Firefly only for years 7-10 and 12. Different arrangements may be made for Years 11 and 13.
 - f. Email between students and teachers is to be limited to when it has a purpose that cannot be achieved via following the above guidelines, please.
 - g. Further technical guidance will be provided by Mr McStravick, who will send a document to all students to this effect.

Part 3: Reports and End of Year Examinations (relevant for Years 7-10 and 12).

The College's intention is to provide you with Learning Scores as usual in Trinity 1. We recognise the learning context is unusual, but we will still report over student approaches to study. Given the arrangements imposed on us for public exam groups this year, the importance and purpose of student ongoing engagement with Learning Scores that the College has championed for several years has never been more relevant.

The College's intention is also to hold end of year internal examinations for all the reasons they are valuable to students and teachers alike in any year. Full details of when and how this will be managed will be provided before Exeat, by when we should have a clearer picture as to whether or not these assessments will be possible to take in school.

Part 4: Predicted Grades for GCSE and A Level (relevant for Years 11 and 13).

As you will be aware from my letter of April 3rd and the attachment sent alongside it from Ofqual, the College must provide Exam Boards with predicted grades and ranking orders of students within each grade range. Our grade predictions will be moderated and adjusted by the Exam Boards and Ofqual before final grades are awarded in the summer. A Level results day will be Thursday August 13th and GCSE results day will be Thursday August 20th. There are several aspects of this process that I wish to make clear and reassure you over.

Final Grades are not in your or our gift to control. In a normal year outcomes depend on the unpredictability of an exam paper and performance 'on the day', whatever the previous preparation has been. This year's outcomes will not be subject to the unpredictability of exam performance, but will depend on the statistical modelling applied by organisations outside of the College to the College generated predictions.

Our commitment to the students therefore, is to establish the most equitable and fair way of generating our predictions ahead of that external moderation and adjustment.

This will be a complex and time consuming process that begins now we have Ofqual's steers, and will not be completed until close before the Ofqual deadline of May 29th. Since grade predictions in this way have never been required before, they do not exist already, and neither has a robust process existed before to generate them in this way.

Whilst we are prevented by Ofqual instruction from sharing any information about what the predictions are with children and parents, we are happy to provide the following overview and reassurance over the robustness of the process to be undertaken over the coming weeks.

1. The first phase will involve statistical analysis of student attainment in from our major assessments since Summer 2019:
 - a. No one data set or assessment will be the basis of predictions or ranking. We will look at attainment from Summer 2019, Michaelmas 2019, and Lent 2020.
 - b. This analysis will be combined with statistical modelling of likely uplift expected across the part of the school year between lockdown and summer exams. We are modelling the uplift that we think was likely to have happened. We are not using the most recent attainment data as a prediction unadjusted.
2. The second phase will build on the above modelling and will involve a review of it in light of the more extensive day to day knowledge and evidence of individual student progress and potential. The children are individuals with their own pathways and not simply data sets, and we respect the objective professional experience and judgement of their teachers in this regard. This phase of the process will review evidence aside from that already modelled and that relates to a child's individual learning journey. It will incorporate all and any evidence a Department or Pastoral or the SEND team view as relevant.
3. There is no requirement or expectation for students to take new tests or assessments to add to this evidence base, but it is an option that Ofqual have confirmed can be taken up so long as any data generated remotely is treated with caution by schools and in a way that

does not penalise those unable or unwilling to sit further assessments after schools have entered lockdown.

4. Choosing this option may add to a wider picture of a student's trajectory, but it does not automatically benefit a prediction, even if the marks are high, because the data generated will be treated as one part of the year long evidence base, not as a replacement for it.
5. Before any such assessments are arranged, therefore, it is essential to be clear over what their significance can and cannot be. The school has prepared a separate document outlining this in more detail that is available at request from any Head of Department, Head of Section, or my PA, Mrs Daniels (edaniels@sdmail.org.uk)

If you have any further general questions about this summer's grading process, please send them by email to Mrs Daniels (edaniels@sdmail.org.uk) by 1300 on Wednesday this week. I will review them and produce a follow up document giving clarities where I can by close of school on Friday. If you are seeking advice regarding your child's specific context, you should contact the relevant teacher or Head of Section directly.

The reassurance I give here is that the school takes seriously its commitment to supporting student aspiration alongside maintaining an integrity and fairness in how we meet our responsibilities to each child and to Ofqual.

Part 5: Year 11 and Year 13 Bridging Courses (relevant for Years 11 and 13)

Since Ofqual have stated that no course coverage or assessments since lockdown are necessary as part of this summer's grading process, the College has taken the exciting opportunity to plan new and bespoke bridging courses for Year 11 and Year 13 rather than continuing study and assessment of completed courses for examinations that are not happening, as some schools are. These new courses have a unique benefit. As I wrote at the start of April, no previous year groups have ever had the opportunity to engage with this level of preparation for the next stage of their education in this way. If there is a silver lining from the cancellation of public examinations, this is it.

We will maintain pastoral contact and support for Years 11 and 13 across the whole term. Irrespective of the academic offerings, we believe this is what a compassionate school should do at a time of challenge. The academic offerings outlined below give Year 11 and 13 more lesson time between now and Exeat than they would have had ahead of exam leave in a 'normal' year. Again, we feel this is right in the current situation. As in a normal year, we do not intend to keep students in a taught programme beyond Exeat, but as stated above, we will still be here to support pastorally.

Year 11: Pre-A Level Bridging Courses.

Year 11 will be organised into A Level style timetable – six lessons per fortnight in each of 4 different A Level subjects, alongside gaps in their timetables for private study. Students will be talked through their timetables by tutors during Period 1 on Tuesday. This programme will be in place until Exeat (22 May). As far as possible we have organised students into the subjects they indicated to us as A Level choices last term. Where this has not been possible

given that we are using the current timetable structure, or where options were not submitted, we have allocated students to subjects that they can attend and where we think they will benefit or build on current strengths. The courses delivered will help pave the way for better transition to A Level and full engagement with them is expected. Teachers will generate a short review of each student's engagement at the end of the course. We ask that all students attend the subjects and lessons allocated next week and contact Mrs Latham (elatham@sdmail.org.uk) and Mr O'Dwyer (podwyer@sdmail.org.uk) at the end of the week if they wish to discuss a potential swap.

In the event that any Year 11 student wishes to be considered for entry into Ofqual's proposed Public Examinations sessions being planned for the Autumn, we will provide guidance and support in due course, but we advise against making any decision or planning in this regard until at least after Exeat when the overall picture may be clearer.

Year 13: Pre-University or Employment Bridging Courses.

Year 13 will be allocated to six of a possible seven subject themes for the next four weeks (until 15 May). Each theme will involve two lesson per week. Allocations have been made based on student ambitions for further education or employment, as we know them, and then as far as possible current subject areas of study and interest. Students will be talked through their timetables by tutors during Period 1 on Tuesday. For the first fortnight, the focus will be on academic and intellectual enrichment outside and beyond the A level syllabus, delivered in a university style that combines pre-reading, teacher lectures / presentations, and teacher facilitated seminars discussion. Across the second fortnight, the focus in some sessions will shift to the more practical information and advice associated with moving out of school and to university or employment, and we will work with Year 13 to establish aspects of this course content, accommodating what they want to know more about as far as we can. We ask that all students attend the subjects themes allocated next week and contact Mrs Latham (elatham@sdmail.org.uk) and Mr Brewer (abrewer@sdmail.org.uk) at the end of the week if they wish to discuss a potential swap.

Our understanding of Universities is that they will treat this summer's allocated Grades as they would grades in any year. Further advice over responses to results will be provided by our UCAS team this term.

Part 6: Year 11 Transition into the Sixth Form (relevant for Year 11)

In this time of uncertainty, the College is keen to offer the reassurances it can. Unless a family has given formal notice of departure at the end of this year, or unless parents are contacted by Mr O'Dwyer for a more in depth conversation before the end of next week, it is our wish to assure every current Year 11 student of a place to study a four A Level programme at St Dunstan's in September. In a normal year this offer is dependant on the achievement of at least six grade 6s in GCSEs with 7s in the subjects most closely linked to A Level choices. Given the heightened uncertainty around public exam grades this summer, we are keen to be supportive now. Our approach this year for those not in the groups

outlined above will be to give students the four subjects they have chosen with the proviso that those subject choices may be altered in any of these circumstances:

1. As a result of student request based on experience of a Pre-A Level course and/or Grades awarded this summer, that is viewed as in their interests by the College.
2. As a result of the College requiring a changed subject profile based on the student's engagement with a Pre-A Level course and/or Grades awarded this summer.
3. As a result of a timetabling practicality that prevents the choices made being deliverable (in which case we would be in touch before Exeat).

In uncertain times, we want to do all we can to offer the certainty of a place next year, but retain the flexibility to amend the subject profile, when wise to do so, to ensure it is in any given student's long term best interests. We will continue to require all students to be achieving at least CCC at the end of Year 12 to continue study into Year 13.

Part 7: Conclusion (relevant to all)

Thank you for reaching the end of this extremely long letter. Its length has been necessary to set out as clearly as possible the details and rationale behind the education on offer to your children this term. As I stated at the start of the letter, College staff are committed to providing the best possible education we can in whatever context, however constrained, we find ourselves. I thank them for all the work they have already put into this planning and will continue to give to its delivery, and above all for their ongoing commitment to the education of your children.

There may well be circumstances in some of your households and in those of some of our staff over the coming weeks that challenge or compromise your or our ability to meet these expectations in full. As a compassionate College we will do all we can to respect and support those circumstances where they affect you.

We hope and expect your children to benefit and grow as students and young people through the education we continue to provide, and look forward to building on that progress in the years to come, or seeing it blossom into future success beyond the College for our alumni.

Please do share this letter with your children and discuss it with them.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A Johnson
Deputy Head (Academic)