



Radley Road · Abingdon-on-Thames · Oxfordshire · OX14 3PS
T. 01235 524658 · F. 01235 544803 · E. office@olab.org.uk
www.olab.org.uk

Stephen Oliver
PRINCIPAL

20 March 2020

Dear Parents

We are entering a period of national uncertainty and we hope, as far as education is concerned, that more clarity will be forthcoming from the government in the coming days. Communication is a key priority for us at OLA and we will keep all channels of communication open to support families.

The situation we find ourselves in has the potential to cause great stress. It is important that we maintain our care and support for pupils, staff and parents in the way that we would if pupils were still on site. Parents can e-mail Form Teachers and Year Tutors in the same way as they do now, and once Zoom becomes a natural part of our everyday experiences, our staff will use this to communicate with pupils in their care.

The remote learning pack included alongside this letter contains advice to pupils about the channels that will be open to them to seek support. We will circulate details of any well-being, support, counselling or advice services for families and staff as and when they become available. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns. In the first instance, please contact my Deputy, Dr Reynaert (breyngaert@olab.org.uk) for academic issues and Form Teachers and Year Tutors for pastoral issues. If you wish to speak to us face-to face, a zoom meeting can be arranged at your convenience.

This is a time of constant change for our OLA community and it is incumbent on us to offer as smooth a transition to remote learning as we can. Staff have worked intensively over several weeks to bring our provision to its current form. As well as a commitment to delivering the best service they can, departmental teams will be checking in regularly with each other to maintain and adapt, where necessary, each subject's offering. Whilst our plans have been tested rigorously and we have every confidence that they can be delivered practically on the ground, please be assured that the programme will be under constant review, and your feedback, particularly in the first week, will be invaluable.

All school communities, including our own, will be feeling their way next week and navigating their own path through this unprecedented situation. For pupils, the changes will be very unsettling and their individual responses to the crisis will be varied. For many of our pupils, the prospect of continuing their learning in the midst of this will be unfamiliar and perhaps frightening. It is vital that all in our community take the time they need to adapt to the new working environment, taking one step at a time together as an OLA family.

For those families with pupils who were due to take public exams, separate letters will follow once we have been given details of the government's plans. Rest assured that we are working on putting an alternative programme in place, should the need arise and if the plan for preparing pupils for GCSEs/A Levels falls away.

With all this very much in mind, we have mapped out our vision of the phases of transition required to maintain remote learning over the longer term as follows:

Phase 1:

The last week of term offers an opportunity for all families to familiarise themselves with our provision. We are ready to resolve any glitches that are reported to us. All pupils should have access to their Firefly login and school e-mail. By now, they should have logged in to the free version of Zoom using their school e-mail address. Help sheets are included with this letter. Please bear with us during this period of transition and feed back any concerns or technical issues. All staff will be following the plans outlined for each year group in the attached Remote Learning document and we are all ready to support with any difficulties.

For technical and online access issues (Firefly, email), please report to kball@olab.org.uk

For any remote learning programme issues, report to breyngaert@olab.org.uk

For any Zoom specific enquiries, report to Assistant Head (Safeguarding) csharkey@olab.org.uk

For any general pastoral enquiries, report to Assistant Head (Pastoral) lallen@olab.org.uk

Easter Holiday:

A chance for some valuable rest and an opportunity for all to familiarise themselves further with the tools we are using.

Phase 2:

From Tuesday 21 April, pupils will embark on the Remote Learning Programme for the Trinity term, according to the plan for each year group.

Phase 3:

The platforms we have chosen are particularly resilient. However, we anticipate increased volumes of traffic to these sites and, as a result, we are preparing a back-up in the unlikely event that one of these platforms collapses. A programme of phased training will therefore be taking place behind the scenes on the best teaching and learning platforms available, should we need to use them.

We now enter a phase of what will no doubt be a prolonged period of remote learning in the confidence that our provision is the best it can be. We recognise that people will need time to adjust to the new learning methods and that the pace of this will be different for everyone.

Please reassure your son/daughter that they have time to get into these new working habits. Although the expectation is that all students will be logging into Firefly on Monday 23 March to begin remote learning, they must not panic if they do not get the hang of it straightaway – we are all here to support them and help them adjust.

Communication is vital during this time, so please do not hesitate to make contact using the e-mail addresses given above.

With all best wishes for an enjoyable week-end.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Oliver