

Dear Parents,

Although it has been a sad and unusual week not seeing all of the children at school, I am incredibly proud of the way pupils, parents and teachers have worked wonderfully together to make remote learning a success.

Below I have included information and updates around a number of topics, including a **Parent Information Event at 5pm on Wednesday 20th January.**

I have greatly enjoyed visiting many families at home this week to support with matters about remote learning and I also continue to be happy to discuss any matters that families wish to raise over the phone – do use the information below to get in touch.

1. Parent Information Event – Next Week

Last week I was grateful to be able to speak to groups of parents who have pupils in Year 11 and Year 13, and to be able to answer the questions that they and their children wanted to discuss.

Next week, I have arranged a Live Event which all pupils and parents will be able to watch, listen to and take part in online. This Parent Information Event will take place at **5pm on Wednesday 20th January.**

To join the Live Event next Wednesday afternoon, you can click on this [link](#) which will be shared again by text and email again earlier that day.

In this Live Event, I will be able to provide more information about plans for the future (including school re-opening and exams) and I will be able to share with you more information about our plans for remote learning in the weeks ahead. This will include guidance around how to best support pupils when learning at home and an update about our planned rewards for pupils who are making an excellent effort to excel in online learning.

2. Remote Learning

Ahead of that event, if you want more information about remote learning, please do visit our [website](#).

On the website you will find a remote learning guide for parents translated into a number of different languages, as well as a pupil and parent guide about how to use [Microsoft Teams](#).

A reminder also that if your child is having technical difficulties accessing the learning, including any problems with their laptop or their login and password details, then please do email info@arkstalbans.org as soon as possible.

Don't forget that all pupils receive an email at 8.30am every day from their head of year and they have a deadline every day of 2.00pm for all of their assignments or quizzes from that day to be complete.

3. Digital Devices

This year we have been able to give out over 800 computers to pupils for them to use for remote learning.

This is a huge number of devices and it has only been possible due to the support provided by Ark Schools and the trustees of St Alban's Academy.

A dedicated staff team at the school have also worked incredibly hard to organise the set-up and distribution of these devices.

Without their excellent work, we would not have been able to give out as many devices as we have and we would not have been able to do so as quickly as we have done

We have also been able to give out a smaller number of data dongles to support pupils who do not have internet access at home. We hope to have more data dongles to be available to share with families next week.

If your child is struggling to access remote learning because they don't have a laptop or because they don't have access to the internet, please do let us know by emailing info@arkstalbans.org and we will place them on a waiting list for a device straightaway.

4. Rewards

As I mentioned above, pupils have made an excellent start to remote learning. Almost all pupils are regularly attending live lessons, completing quizzes and submitting assignments on time every day.

I want to make sure that the effort pupils have made is recognised and that they remain motivated to work hard throughout this period of school closure. It is important for pupils to know that if they work hard, they will be rewarded both now and in the future.

Therefore, on Monday afternoon I will be delivering to a few pupils some golden envelopes containing vouchers and other rewards for them to enjoy. These will be pupils who have consistently completed everything that is expected of them, and who have done so on time and to high standard every day.

This is something I hope to be able to do each week, so please do encourage your child to continue working hard and hopefully they will benefit from receiving a golden envelope in the weeks ahead.

5. Onsite Provision

A reminder that the school is open to a small number of children who are from families where parents are keyworkers or where there is an element vulnerability. If you would like to discuss the possibility of your child joining our onsite provision, please email info@arkstalbans.org.

6. Covid Testing

As I have shared with you previously, we are now set-up to run regular Covid testing in school and we will begin doing so for pupils who are learning onsite from next week.

We don't know yet what the future holds, but it is likely that when schools re-open, Covid testing may still be required. With that in mind, please do complete the [consent form](#) online as soon as possible.

7. Free-school Meals

Similarly to last year when the school was closed, vouchers will be provided to all families who are entitled to free-school meals.

This week, all families who normally receive free school meals should have received an email from an organisation called Wonde (please check spam and junk mail folders if you have not received yours yet).

Wonde was the organisation we were using in the Autumn term to provide vouchers to families when year groups or classes were isolating away from the school.

The vouchers from Wonde this week have been provided to cover the three days last week (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday when the school was closed). From next week, our vouchers will be provided by a different organisation called Edenred.

If you haven't received your vouchers or if you are not sure of your free-school meals status, please get in touch with the school urgently by emailing info@arkstalbans.org.

8. Exams

There are a lot of news reports and social media rumours about exams and grades for pupils in Year 11 and Year 13.

Nobody knows exactly how it will work yet as the plans have not been formally announced. As soon as we have concrete information, we will share it with you alongside our plan for how it will work and I hope to be able to share some new information with you all in the Live Event on Wednesday.

All we know for sure is that pupils need to learn as much as possible and they need to keep working hard at remote learning. If they do that, then whatever happens later in the year, we know that they will be fully prepared.

9. Keeping In Touch

If you would like to discuss anything with me, please do email jayne.hooper@arkstalbans.org who will be happy to arrange a time for you and I to speak on the phone next week.

Kind regards,



Guy Rimmer
Principal