



The Aylesbury Vale Academy

Including Berryfields Primary

COLLABORATING *for* EXCELLENCE

PARENT GUIDE TO SCHOOL CLOSURE & REMOTE LEARNING

BULLETIN No. 4

3RD April 2020

We hope that you and your families are safe and managing in this extremely difficult time. This has been a period of significant adjustment for the school, students and parents and we appreciate all that you have done. We cannot always get things right as there is no blueprint for this arrangement so please contact enquiries@theacademy.me if you have any questions or concerns.

Easter is upon us and we have significantly reduced the amount of work for students during this holiday. We have continued to provide some tasks for secondary and primary students because you have told us that you think your children would benefit from this and that it will help to keep them engaged in the absence of a real holiday!

What is happening in school?

AVA continues to be open for children of critical workers, vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with Education, Health and Care Plans where appropriate and necessary. The full list can be found here:

Please remember that both parents need to qualify as key workers to access school provision. In single parent families, only one key worker is required unless the other parent is able to provide childcare.

Children who do not fall into these groups should remain at home with appropriate care.

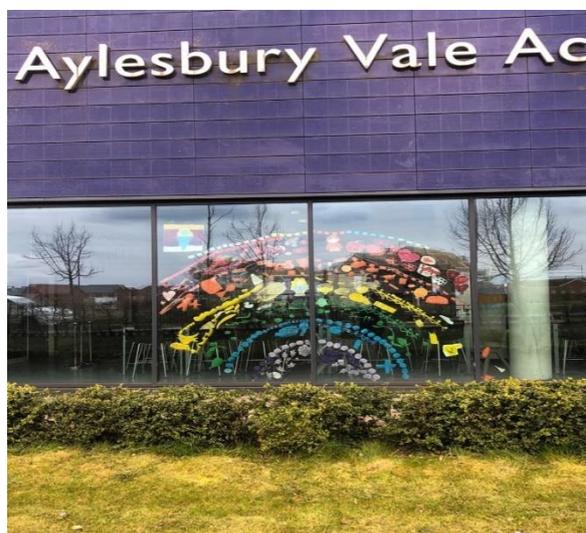
We cannot guarantee we will be able to supervise these identified children at school indefinitely and we have been asked to use our discretion about how long we maintain this provision.

These children will be expected to come to school from 8:30-3:00pm every day.

Should one of these children develop symptoms, we will follow the normal procedures, contact you and send them home.

The children in school have been working really hard all week rehearsing a special song to go with the giant rainbow that we have created in the secondary atrium.

This song will be available on the school website in due course.



If you or a student wishes to collect something from the school, please do not turn up unannounced. In the interests of social distancing and you having to wait a long time for someone to answer the door, please contact enquiries@theacademy.me to arrange a time.

What is happening at Easter and the bank holidays (10th & 13th April)?

The school will remain open for those students who are children of critical workers and others who meet the criteria (please see above).

Schools **have not** been asked to open on Good Friday and Easter Monday (10th & 13th April). However, a huge number of staff have offered to come in to support students, so we are able to remain open. I am extremely grateful to staff who have volunteered their time to cover these two bank holidays as well as those giving up their Easter holidays.

What about learning from home during Easter?

Primary

Thank you to all of the families who are working so hard to complete the tasks sent home. In the primary phase we have chosen to set more open ended, project based tasks for all children over the two week Easter break. We have kept these as broad as possible to enable all children to access them.

We are aware that from Saturday 4th April to Sunday 19th April we would normally be out of school and that children are tired and in need of some rest. They are also likely to need variety in their days as opposed to the more traditional learning activities that we have been sending home during term time. We are mindful that in these unprecedented times parents may appreciate some work for children to continue with over the 'break'.

The primary teaching staff are using the next two weeks to evaluate the work that we have sent home to date and to plan how we will operate over the next period. We are especially considering the transition for the Year 6 children and looking at the possibility of using a similar model for them as we are using with Year 7 and 8 students. We will communicate any adaptations or changes from Monday 20th April.

Secondary

Thank you for your patience as we continue to learn and adjust to setting classwork online. In the secondary phase we have shifted to a simpler timetable and we hope that students are getting approximately 5 pieces of work per day, each of which should take between 30 and 60 minutes. We have had some feedback from you which we value and we hope you agree we're continuing to learn and improve.

We are aware that from Saturday 4th April to Sunday 19th April we would normally be on the Easter break and that students are tired after not just a normal busy term but also with all the additional stress that recent changes have brought. They are likely to need a rest. We're also aware that many students are finding that completing a bit of school work each day is helping them to deal with the current lock-down and provides an element of escape.

To try and meet this variety of needs over the next two weeks students will not receive their normal daily tasks but will be given one task from each of their subjects per week. This piece of work will take the form of a project which they may be able to complete in around an hour but which they can extend and spend longer on if they prefer.

Students will find they are set just 2-3 tasks each day from 6th - 10th April (one for each subject) and they will have until 19th April to complete them in whatever order they like. Shorter and more structured tasks will resume with the new term on Monday 20th April.

What about Free School Meals?

If your child/(ren) is/are eligible for benefits tested FSM (not Universal Infant Free School Meals), the government has now introduced a new national voucher scheme.

For w/c Monday 30 March, we will still be making a cash payment to a parent's /carer's bank account, which is intended for the purchase of food for your eligible child/(ren). These payments are being processed this week for all the parents/carers who have replied with their bank details.

The amount we will pay is £2.50 per day for Secondary students and £2.30 per day for Primary students for any days that the school is closed. Note: this does not include the Easter holidays.

From w/c 20 April we will then be using the newly launched government national voucher scheme to provide supermarket vouchers to those eligible for FSM (not Universal Infant Free School Meals).

- A supermarket voucher to the value of £15 each week for every child eligible for benefits-related free school meals (who is not attending school) will be issued

- An 'eCode' will be emailed directly to the parent/carers of the pupils(s) eligible for free school meals. Parents/carers will receive instructions on how to use this eCode to create an eGift card for a range of supermarkets: Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Waitrose or M&S
- Once parents/carers have created their voucher, they will be able to redeem them in-store at the selected retailer by either presenting the voucher on a smartphone or tablet, or presenting a paper copy of the voucher

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please contact enquiries@theacademy.me

Free School Meals scam:

Some schools have already reported that parents/carers of children in receipt of free school meals are being targeted by fraudsters. Fraudsters are targeting families, emailing parents/carers with messages such as 'If your child is entitled to free school meals, send your bank details to the school and they will help with funding while the school is closed'. The email contains fake links for the parents/carers to follow if they want to receive this funding.

Concerned parents/carers or anybody with information about coronavirus-related scams are being asked to email tradingstandards@bucksandsurreytradingstandards.gov.uk (preferable) or by phone on 01296 388788.

What is happening with Exams?

A reminder that Primary assessments, including SATs, and exams including GCSEs, AS levels and A levels, will not go ahead this summer.

We have received the latest update from the Department for Education regarding the awarding of GCSE and Vocational Grades:

Exam boards will be contacting schools, colleges and other exam centers after Easter asking them to submit, by a deadline that will be no earlier than 29 May 2020, the following:

- *a center assessment grade for every student in each of their subjects: that is, the grade they would be most likely to have achieved if they had sat their exams and completed any non-exam assessment. Judgements should balance different sources of evidence such as:*
 - *classwork*
 - *bookwork*
 - *any participation in performances in subjects such as music, drama or PE*
 - *any non-exam assessment - whether or not complete*
 - *the results of any assignments or mock exams*
 - *previous examination results - for example, for any re-sitting students or those with relevant AS qualifications*
 - *any other records of student performance over the course of study*

Year 11 teachers have already entered estimated grades for students and will be reviewing them over the next few weeks in order to comply with this request.

A letter from Ofqual has been sent to the parents and carers of all Year 11 students. If you have not received this, please contact enquiries@theacademy.me

What about my references for college applications?

Please continue to apply for your Post16 places. Add Mrs Leach's name and email (rleach@theacademy.me) as the reference and she will make sure they are completed for you.

What about Year 6 and 11 Leavers' Hoodies?

If you want one of these, please contact Mrs Leach for Year 11 (rleach@theacademy.me) and Mrs Stewart for Year 6 (fstewart@theacademy.me)

Will there be a Year 11 Prom and a Year 6 Celebration?

The Year 11 Prom **will** still go ahead just **not** on the original date of 19th June. We are looking at moving the date to October and having the Prom as a Prom/Reunion. I will inform you of the date over the next few months once we see what is happening. If you haven't signed up for the prom and wish to join us in this celebration, then please log onto Parent Pay to sign up.

The Year 6 Celebration has been postponed and we are looking at alternative dates in the autumn term to hold this.

What about Parent Pay refunds?

We have outlined below the steps we are taking to refund you with any sums you have paid to the school via Parent Pay. Refunds mentioned below will be paid directly by Parent Pay to the bank account the payment was received from.

- A refund will be arranged for all children with a credit balance of £1.00 or greater on their catering account. For those with a balance of less than £1.00, this will remain as a credit available for use when the Academy fully re-opens.
- For students in Years 6, 11 and 13, a full refund of their catering account will be given, regardless of amount.
- Secondary school trips organised by the History, Geography and Performing Arts Departments will be fully refunded.
- Payments received for the Year 11 Prom will be fully refunded.
- Primary school trips, specifically the Slovakia match, the Royal Opera House and Green Park trips will be fully refunded.
- Parents have been advised separately regarding the Secondary school trip to Florida.
- The secondary trip to Seville is currently postponed and we will contact you with an update.
- There will be a further communication regarding the Secondary school trip to Seville as soon as we are clear whether the trip will need to be cancelled or postponed.
- We are hopeful that the Year 6 visit to Manor Farm (next academic year) will still run and are delaying making a decision at present.

We are currently working closely with Parent Pay to arrange these payments and would expect these payments to be transferred to bank accounts week commencing Monday 30 March.

We are also aware that a number of parents will have paid for some services with cash and others will have paid for services such as Berrycare (both breakfast and after school sessions) through other channels. We will be in touch with these parents directly to arrange refunds.

Please rest assured that we are working hard to ensure that funds are transferred back to parents at the earliest opportunity.

If you have any questions please contact Sean Hickey, Finance Manager, by email sean.hickey@theacademy.me

Well-being matters:

Top Tips for your mental wellbeing:

Connect with others. Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important. Stay connected via email, social media, facetime and telephone. Adjust your social media intake if it is making you anxious. If you haven't got anyone to talk to you can call emotional support lines like SANEline and the Samaritans

Be active. Our physical health affects how we feel. It is important to eat healthily, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Build physical activity into your daily routine for example cleaning your home, dancing to music, seated exercise, online workouts.

Take notice and focus on the present. Engage with nature. Open the windows to get fresh air, watch the birds, make the most of any private outdoor space, tend to houseplants, listen to natural sounds apps. If you have a private garden spend time outside.

Stick to the facts and limit your news intake. Try not to stay glued to the news . A constant stream of news can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed. You could set yourself a specific time to read updates or limit to checking a couple of times a day, use trustworthy sources such as GOV.UK or NHS website.

Have a routine. Maintain a sense of routine and try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Wake up and go to bed at healthy times, get enough sleep. Include time to relax.

Keep your mind active. Do something you enjoy. Find something of value in your day and do something for yourself (download a podcast, watch a box set, art and crafts, cooking, gardening, reading a book, DIY). Take a free online course.

Offer support and help others. Helping others makes you feel good. If you are able to try and think of things you can do to help those around you safely and in line with official guidance. Check in with friends, neighbours or colleagues who may be self-isolating or vulnerable.

Keep your children informed by explaining the facts but try and avoid scare stories and over-exposure to the news. Be as truthful as possible. This link may be useful: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/talking-to-your-children-scary-world-news>

Take care of your immediate environment. As you are spending a lot of time at home, you may find it helpful to keep things clean and tidy. If you live with other people, it could help to decide together how you'll use different spaces for example spaces for work.

Working from home can be challenging and isolating. Try to keep a structured day, with a routine for work and to keep both formal and social connections flowing with colleagues. Find tips for working at home here: <https://mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/while-working>

Useful Links

- Kooth - online counselling for young people www.kooth.com

- Every Mind Matters www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/
- Mind www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/
- Mental Health Foundation <https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>
- Heads Up www.thisisheads-up.uk

Helplines

- SANEline - www.sane.org.uk/ Tel: 0300 304 7000 4.30pm- 10.30pm daily
- Samaritans - www.samaritans.org/ Tel: 116 123
- Shout Crisis Text line -Text Shout to 85258
- CALM - CALM is for men in the UK who need to talk. open 5pm-midnight Tel:0800 58 58 58
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

If you have any concerns regarding a child who attends the Academy, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Leader, Miss E. Kitter using the following email address: safeguarding@theacademy.me

If you have any concerns about a child outside of school, these can be reported here: <https://www.bucksscp.org.uk/concerned-about-child/> or dial 999 if a child is in immediate danger.

Learn about the government response to coronavirus on GOV.UK. For further health information and advice please visit nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Foodbank:

The Berryfields Foodbank is opening and its distribution point is in Esquires Coffeeshop next to Sainsbury's across the road from the Academy They'll be opening every week Monday 10:30-12 and Thursday 2-3:30. Opening times may change in the future.

They will be open for people to donate (non-perishable) items but also for anyone who is in a financial crisis or are referred by another agency, they can also come for food packages The foodbank can be contacted at: foodbank@churchoonberryfields.org or call on 07919 332859 for more information.

School Immunisations for Years 8 & 9

We are aware that these were interrupted by school closure and some students will not yet have received their immunisations. Please see below a letter from the immunisations team.

Dear Parent

If your child has not yet received their vaccination that had been planned for this school year, please don't worry. The Bucks School Immunisation Team are working with each school on a plan to ensure that as many vaccinations as possible that are due, are carried out after Easter.

We will keep you informed of our plans and any changes that may occur.

We are also continuing to run our community clinics during this time.

If you have any queries regarding your child's immunisations, please contact the Bucks School Immunisation Team on 01296 567860.

*Many Thanks
Buckinghamshire School Nursing Immunisation Team*

How will we be told if the school re-opens?

Parents/carers will be notified by the school via:-

- *Email*
- *Text*
- *Announcements on website*

***Thank you for everything you are doing at this difficult time in support the children at the Aylesbury Vale Academy.
Stay safe.***