



**Letter from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master**

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Learning and Teaching in the Junior School**

We are now well into our second week of remote learning and I wanted to write to update you about our plans for teaching and learning after the Easter break. If you are a parent of a pupil in the Senior School you will have received a letter from me already and whilst some of what follows would apply to any pupil, the needs of our younger pupils are quite distinct and indeed vary between the very youngest learners in the Kindergarten and the eldest learners in P7.

- Can I thank everyone for their real sense of community in working together in this way and we have appreciated all the feedback which we have received from parents and pupils. We are surveying pupils and parents in KG-P7 to find out about their experiences in order to refine what is being offered. In the Senior School some 242 pupils replied to the survey and the average time spent per day on school work was five hours or more and feedback was very positive indeed. Rest assured we will feedback to you on the survey and apply any learnings if at all possible.
- We are very mindful that families will be impacted differently by the coronavirus, with perhaps ill family members, a number of people accessing a computer or device and parents having their own work to do as well as trying to monitor their child's progress. This causes stresses and anxieties. We have discussed this with staff and everyone understands the importance of being flexible whilst still setting high standards.
- If you have problems with access to schoology or certain areas within it or are finding functionality a problem, please contact your child's teacher or Mr McHugh on [FMcHugh@staloyusius.org](mailto:FMcHugh@staloyusius.org)
- As you would expect teachers are working very hard to ensure appropriate work is set and feedback given. We are of course providing remote training for staff in the use of this new technology. Please be mindful that teachers themselves might have parental or caring responsibilities and we would ask that we try to function within the normal school day. However rest assured that teachers will respond to you as soon as possible

We break for Easter on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April and I would encourage everyone to treat this as a rest from school work. I have also asked staff to ensure they take this break. The last two weeks have been exceptionally demanding on everyone: parents, pupils and teachers alike. Time spend as a family will be important and although we will not be able to physically live out the Easter story through attendance on Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Sunday, I think it is important we find time to be with God, to reflect prayerfully and perhaps join some of the services taking place through the web.

Our service for key workers will continue to be available through Easter with the exception of Good Friday and Easter Bank Holiday Monday. Thank you to everyone who keeps this going for the children and their parents who rely on this provision.



I had promised to outline what will be happening after Easter so that families and pupils can prepare for some changes to approach based on our experience so far. I have no doubt that further changes will take place as we continually seek to refine what we are offering.

### **Learning for pupils in Junior School from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

Pupils from KG to Primary 7 will continue to receive lessons from class and specialist teachers via Schoology. Junior School staff have been aiming over the last two weeks to strike a balance with the amount of work given out but we continue to be very aware that differing home circumstances can dictate how easy this is to manage. We already have a better understanding of the types and volume of activities that work well on this platform and the information we glean from the on-line survey sent out to you via Schoology this morning (2.4.20) will provide staff with important feedback as to how this feels from your perspective. This will allow us to continue to tailor not only the best educational provision for your child, but also ensure that it is manageable for you and your family's circumstances.

Our social media channels are an excellent way to see what is going on across the piece and I would encourage you to email appropriate images to keep in touch. You can send these to [LRobertson@staloyisus.org](mailto:LRobertson@staloyisus.org)

### **How will teachers keep track of pupil learning?**

From Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April all pupils will be asked to submit, as a minimum, a weekly piece of work in the core subjects of Mathematics and Literacy for teacher review. Work in these areas is published daily and it may be that class teachers will see more than that and any work submitted should receive some feedback. In the other curricular areas, teachers will advise on the timing and frequency of submissions as necessary. It may be that teachers 'mark' submissions or provide feedback based on the learning intention of that particular piece of work. It is reasonable to expect that this would happen within two days of submission. This will allow teachers to check that pupils are keeping up to date with learning on-line and are understanding their work. We will aim to publish work as 'assignments' where possible and relevant and pupils should return work through 'submissions'. Where there are concerns about pupils not submitting work, or engaging with Schoology, parents will be contacted. We are aware that there may be very good reasons for this but we would like to ensure that we have removed all possible barriers to home-learning from our end.

Pupils and parents are invited to continue to contact their teachers via Schoology if they are unsure of their work or require further support.

### **What about virtual teaching or face-time?**

In the Senior School we are currently investigating on-line platforms such as MS Teams which may be useful for teacher-class contact or for running subject 'clinics' at specific times. Given the age of our pupils in the Junior School, we need to make sure we have all safeguards in place and are closely monitoring the advice being issued to schools. We do understand that it would be beneficial for many pupils to see or hear their class teachers and maintain that very important relationship but current advice from Education Scotland and School Leaders Scotland suggests that teachers should not be using these platforms to communicate with pupils/classes. Some schools which provided this facility have now abandoned it. We are currently looking at a number of ways that may provide a safe conduit for this communication and we will update parents when we have more information about these developments.



We have also decided not to offer live lessons for a number of reasons, not least as we are conscious that not all families can guarantee access to IT devices for all their children at scheduled times. We are however considering a recorded brief 'lesson' at the start of the week and some kind of review at the end of the week. We want this to work and therefore are not rushing to introduce it now and then to remove it later. We anticipate being able to write to you about this just before we return to learning after the Easter break.

**Please stay in touch**

If you have concerns about your child's learning, their ability to complete Schoology tasks, or your child is unwell and unable to keep-up with Schoology learning, please contact your child's teacher.

We are conscious that this is a time of uncertainty and that many families may be affected by disruption to their lives. Where issues emerge, please contact us as it is important that we can continue to support our pupils and families as best we can. We do have access to counselling services and Miss Sharp should be contacted if you feel there is a concern or need here.

**Useful Contacts**

Name	Position	Contact
Karen Brown	Junior School Depute: Early Years	<b>KBrown@staloysius.org</b>
Emma Sharp	Junior School Depute: Pastoral	<b>ESharp@staloysius.org</b>
Frank McHugh	Junior School Depute: Learning and Teaching	<b>FMcHugh@staloysius.org</b>
Matthew Bartlett	Head Master	<b>MDBartlett@staloysius.org</b>

*I hope what is shared above is helpful and I have valued the positive comments shared about communications. However please do keep getting in touch as we are all missing the human interaction on which the best schools thrive. I will be writing again at the end of the week with some reflections for Easter and an invitation to engage in some questions for the Head Master. As soon as we can feedback on the pupil survey we will do so.*

*As always, I hope you are all keeping well and safe and I am counting the days when I can be back at drop off to welcome you...*

kindest regards

**Matthew Bartlett**

