

Email from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master

Friday, 29th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Although next Tuesday's statement from the First Minister is eagerly awaited by everyone and there are no official announcements this week, life at St Aloysius' has not been quiet. Indeed, the engagement by our young people has been phenomenal and I have never felt prouder of how our pupils are determined to stare the adversity of a pandemic in the face and simply get on with their learning. They are a credit to their families, the school but, above all, themselves. **Attendance** over the last week hovered between 99% and 100% and engagement with lessons has been just as high (no nipping off for a quick tea break for our pupils!).

Last week, we put out a **pupil survey** to all of our young people from KG through to S6. We were keen to find out about their experience of remote learning and teaching and crucially to ask about their wellbeing in these very difficult times. There may be a few more answers to receive, but as at lunchtime today, some 75% of our Kindergarten and Junior School pupils and 83% of Senior School had replied. The maturity of responses is very impressive and we will be using this to further improve our offer and above all to support our students. A full analysis will be shared, but I wanted to give a quick snapshot of a very positive picture indeed.

In the Junior School:

- **All** pupils told us they felt safe on line
- 99% felt respected by their peers during remote learning.
- 99% of pupils enjoyed the specialist lessons
- 100% could work quietly within their class group when asked
- 95% felt able to ask questions
- 96% felt they were learning new things
- 99% were understanding the work
- 99% had enough (and sometimes too much!) work to do

However, 80% of pupils found on line learning tiring. We have already made adjustments to the day to try to respond to this by encouraging some outside activities, using the non-taught slots more flexibly and working with our teachers to ask them to look at this. A letter has been sent to all parents about these little adjustments to support our learners and staff. On line learning is tiring not matter how much it is enjoyed or challenges.

In the Senior School:

- 72% of students felt the number of live lessons was 'about right' with 22% thinking there were too many. A very small proportion of students wanted more live lessons. It appears the balance is right but we are looking at a couple of year groups where there was more variation in responses
- 70% of students had the right amount of work to complete with 29% thinking there was too much. This equates to 99% of those sampled and so clearly, we should not be increasing workload!
- 95% found work challenging, the same number felt they could share their views on learning with a teacher and 98% had received all the support they required



- Between 90% and 95% of students felt they had clear learning objectives set, had direction on what to learn and received ample feedback
- 97% of students felt safe with on line lessons

In the Senior School, one of the recurring themes which pupils highlighted, which echoes the feedback from staff, was the time between classes was not long enough. With this in mind, we are building in 10 minutes between classes (previously 5 minutes) to allow pupils and teachers more time to get prepared for their next class. In addition, this will allow us all to take time away from our desks and screens, therefore, lunch break has also been extended to help manage everyone's wellbeing.

With effect from Monday 1st February, the new timetable for the Senior School day will look as follows:

8:55-9:10	Form Time
9:20-10:05	Period 1
10:15-11:00	Period 2
11:00-11:20	Break
11:20-12:05	Period 3
12:15-13:00	Period 4
13:00-13:45	Lunch
13:45-13:55	PM Registration
13:55-14:40	Period 5
14:50-15:35	Period 6

We will make any other adjustments needed arising from pupil and staff feedback to further improve provision. Thank you to everyone for providing such positive but useful and honest responses. It is our intention to survey our parents next to hear their views. Thank you to the parents who have enquired about staff wellbeing and expressed their thanks for the commitment of all our colleagues to learning, teaching and wellbeing. We are already sharing feedback from staff within our Staff Wellbeing group which looks after this key part of our community.

Certificated year groups and remote Prelims

No doubt you will be aware that the Scottish Government will be making an announcement next Tuesday (Feb 2nd) on whether schools will be able to open after the mid-term break. Given that we have prelims scheduled from 16th February, this announcement has particular significance. Understandably, many of our pupils are anxious about this and unsure about how to plan their study. We have clear contingency plans, which we have spent many hours discussing, trying to work out what is best for our young people. A separate letter has gone today from Mr Cluckie to parents of pupils in S4-6 about this.

It is not our intention to move the prelim exams again. Prelims as normal, with pupils physically allowed in, is clearly our preferred choice, but we are pragmatic in realising that a return on 16th February may prove aspirational and unachievable given the current national situation.

Therefore, should this not be feasible, we will be proceeding with the prelims being delivered through a secure electronic portal. Students would follow the exact same timetable beginning on 16th February, whether physical or virtual. This will allow students to consolidate their learning of the work done up to Christmas and demonstrate their progress so far. Teachers will be able to give detailed individual feedback of individual strengths and weaknesses, while there is still enough time for pupils to remediate any problems before the final assessments in May.

These prelim exams, which have robust remote invigilation procedures, can be used as part of the evidence of attainment for SQA certification. Just like a physical exam, we would need to be sure that each pupil's submitted work is their own, completed under exam conditions. We also feel that the process of sitting the prelim and obtaining feedback is very worthwhile. Ultimately, though, the best evidence for students will come from their May assessments, with other sources, including assessments done in first term, acting as a backup.

We are being proactive and bold in our approach here because our pupils deserve nothing less. Our colleagues at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Cambridge universities have adopted a similar method of assessment and we are determined to be as forward looking.

Digital Library

The College is creating a digital library for all pupils from KG-S6. This will mean that regardless of the national situation a pupil can access an entire library on their phone or tablet. It can be accessed at any time, any where, it adapts to learning styles and needs, encourages independent reading and responds to our latest survey of library needs from the students where over 33% said they preferred digital resources. It is not an either/or, the libraries still sit in the heart of the schools but we have access to over 400000 titles, we can build a shared and a private collection for the College. It will also have an extensive wellness collection to support the needs of everyone. The details of this will be shared very shortly by Miss Lapping, our College Librarian and we are sure this will be another wonderful asset for the pupils of our schools.

Thank you as ever for the superb support you give to our young people. We all hope and pray for some good news on Tuesday with the First Minister's announcement.

Until then, please have a good weekend and keep safe and well

Kindest regards, thoughts and prayers

Matthew Bartlett,

Head Master



Matthew D. Bartlett HEAD MASTER