



108 Audley Range,
Blackburn,
Lancashire
BB1 1TF.

Tel: 01254 261573
Mob: 07305 918857

www.alislah.org.uk



19th March 2020

Dear Parents,

ASW, I hope this letter reaches you in the best of health and imaan.

Coronavirus: School Closure

You will have heard the announcement from the government yesterday evening about school closures from Monday 23rd March.

I have spoken to the students in Year 10 to let them know that we will do all we can to support them through this difficult and uncertain time. As soon as we know what will happen about exams, we will let you know. I empathise with all of them and know how hard they have worked towards their exams so far.

The teachers have all prepared work and online teaching for the students for this temporary closure. All parents and students will receive an email every Friday to inform you what work needs to be covered for each subject over the following week. We will keep setting work for all year groups and plan to use different options for learning over the period of closure.

Many thanks for your messages of support for the school and for some of the creative ideas that parents have shared with us. I hope that you and your families stay safe and well and please get in touch if you need to via email: head@alislah.org.uk or on the school mobile 07305918857.

Why are schools closing now?

Up until Wednesday the British government's policy had been to keep schools open, not least to ensure that key NHS and frontline care workers can remain in their posts rather than going home to look after their children. But Boris Johnson said the government had been forced to change tack because the rate of Covid-19 infections was increasing faster than anticipated. He said the public health benefits of keeping schools open had shifted and the scientific advice was that schools should close to slow the spread of the virus. But by the time the announcement was made, many schools had already been forced to close because of staff shortages due to illness or self-isolation measures.

What does it mean for parents?

When schools close on Friday, many parents will have little choice but to take time off work to look after their children at home. The measures apply to state and private schools alike, nurseries and sixth-form colleges. The advice is to not ask grandparents to help with childcare, because of their vulnerability to the virus.

We have been drawing up homework packs and online resources to help parents home educate. Without being able to provide immediate details, the government said it plans to provide a skeletal school service for parents who are key workers on the frontline of the national effort to stem the pandemic – including doctors, nurses, and food delivery workers – so they can stay at work. Vulnerable children, those who have a social worker, and pupils entitled to special needs support will also be able to stay in school. Where possible special schools and residential schools will continue to look after children and young people.

Is it safe to send my child to school if I am a key worker?

The government has emphasised throughout that children do not appear to be severely affected by the virus, and with only small numbers of pupils and staff attending school in the coming weeks and months the risk of transmission will be much reduced. The government's chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, has stressed that schools are not dangerous for children and the decision to close now is to "knock down" transmission and delay the progress of the virus.

What if only one parent is a key worker?

If one parent is a key worker, the government will expect the other parent to have their child at home. Single parents who are key workers will obviously be entitled to a school place.

What about the summer exams?

GCSEs have been cancelled and it's not clear exactly what will replace them. In England, almost all qualifications are now assessed by end of course exams so there is no continuous assessment to rely on. However, GCSE students have already sat mock exams which will have given us some idea of their pupils' likely results. The education secretary was at pains to reassure pupils and their families that every child would get "the proper recognition" they deserve. "We're working very closely with Ofqual to have a detailed set of measures that make sure no child is unfairly penalised," he said.

How long are schools likely be closed?

At this stage no-one is able to say exactly how long schools will stay closed, though it seems clear it's more likely to be a matter of months rather than weeks, depending on how the pandemic progresses. The education secretary, Gavin Williamson, told MPs he would be "guided by scientific and medical advice" on reopening. In practice they could remain closed until the start of the next school year in September.

What will children be able to do while they are off school?

The government is keen to encourage as much educational activity at home as is feasible, but parents are going to have to be creative – and very patient. As well as homework materials provided by individual schools, the government is working with the BBC to develop resources to keep children occupied and stimulated and many e-learning platforms are offering their resources free of charge.

With cinemas, museums, theatres and libraries closed, all normal entertainment is ruled out. Like everyone else, children will be subject to the same social-distancing rules which mean travel and outings are curtailed and most activities will have to be home-based. One of the challenges will be to keep children physically active with group sporting activities and space confined.

Jzk
Apa Nikhat

Al Islah Girls' High School,
108 Audley Range,
Blackburn,
Lancashire, BB1 1TF

head@alislah.org.uk
(01254)261573