

19 March 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

College closure

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter. As you will be aware, the government have announced that all schools are to close from the end of the day on Friday 20 March until further notice, except for providing supervision for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. We are already fielding telephone calls asking us to look after extra children and I am sorry that we cannot. The purpose of school closures is social distancing, and if we opened to too many children, we would be operating contrary to scientific evidence and government stipulation.

This letter aims to provide information on:

1. key workers
2. vulnerable children
3. remote learning
4. pastoral care
5. free school meals

1. Key workers

We are awaiting the official definition of a 'key worker' but envisage that it will include NHS workers, emergency services, school staff and delivery drivers. If this is you, and you require us to look after your child, we urgently need to know so that we can plan staffing and accommodation. Please can you therefore email keyworkers@thespirescollege.com as soon as possible and before Monday to tell us that your child needs to remain in college. We then know who to expect and can plan accordingly. In your email please provide:

- your name
- your child's name and tutor group
- your occupation (i.e. why you are regarded as a key worker)
- your employer's details

Once we get a definitive list of keyworkers, I will send this out but we need to start planning.

Please note that the need to operate with a skeleton staff means that students will not have their timetabled teachers. They will be supervised and supported as they carry out the remote learning detailed later in this letter. The college dining facilities will operate as normal and the college's cleaning contractor is working at normal capacity to maintain a safe and clean environment.

All students that are attending college are required to wear uniform as usual and from 8.30 am to 2.50 pm.

2. Vulnerable students

Some students will be expected to be in college. This includes those with statutory safeguarding plans and children in the care system. Our designated safeguarding lead will contact these parents and carers to ensure they are aware of the need for those children to be in school.

The government have also suggested that children with EHCPs be classed as vulnerable. However the particular health needs of some of our young people would suggest that a busy classroom is not the best place for them. We will also be unable to provide our usual levels of support for these students. If you are a parent of a child with an EHCP and you feel they would be vulnerable at home and so wish them to be in college, please email keyworkers@thespirescollege.com as soon as possible and before Monday. In your email please provide:

- your name
- your child's name and tutor group
- the reason why you require your child to be in school

Please note that the need to operate with a skeleton staff means that students will not have their timetabled teachers. They will be supervised and supported as they carry out remote learning detailed later in this letter. The college dining facilities will operate as normal and the college's cleaning contractor is working at normal capacity to maintain a safe and clean environment.

All students that are attending college are required to wear uniform as usual and from 8.30 am to 2.50 pm.

3. Remote learning

We now have to offer remote learning for our students.

Students should aim to follow their usual college timetable as far as possible. All students have a log-in for Google Classroom. The class teacher will set work via Google Classroom and students should work on this for their allotted hour, before moving on to the next subject. For those students that have told us that they do not have IT access, we will be posting out work to be done in the same way.

Google Classroom allows students to submit work to teachers and to post questions. We will also be contacting students, if necessary, via their college email accounts. Any email communication with staff should be via college accounts only. If staff are unwell, we will endeavour to ensure work is still available but the list of useful websites is also of great value in this scenario.

Of course, many parents may wish to offer other educational experiences at home to supplement the remote learning we can offer. This would be fantastic and if we can offer any help and guidance with this, please do get in touch.

How to access and use Google Classroom:

Please see attached guide

How to access Remote Apps (the college network, including all programmes and email):

- ▲ Go to the College's website:
- ▲ Scroll to the bottom and click on 'Student Login'
- ▲ Students should sign in with their usual College username and password
- ▲ Once students are logged in, they can access:
- ▲ Their saved documents by clicking on 'File Explorer'
- ▲ Microsoft applications such as Word, PowerPoint or Publisher by clicking on 'Microsoft Office 2016'. Students can also access their College email from this folder using 'Outlook 2016'
- ▲ Adobe software such as Photoshop by clicking on 'Adobe Design'
- ▲ To return to the Remote Apps home screen, click on 'All Resources' in the top left hand corner

Useful websites:

- ▲ www.hegartymaths.com
- ▲ www.mathsgenie.co.uk – Especially useful for revision in Years 10 and 11
- ▲ www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bitesize all subjects
- ▲ <https://www.senecalearning.com/> all subjects
- ▲ <https://www.youtube.com/user/mrbruff> (English GCSE)
- ▲ <https://www.educake.co.uk/> Students should have a log-in for Science and Geography
- ▲ www.linguascope.com MFL
- ▲ www.language-gym.com MFL

4. Pastoral support

Our pastoral and support staff will continue to work during closure although it is likely that many will be working remotely and not in college. They will be available by email to students and parents and will be able to access messages left on their college voicemails. They will also be checking in with children and families by phone to check if any support is needed. Students with additional needs or particular vulnerabilities will be allocated a member of staff who will maintain very regular contact with them. College staff will all remain contactable during working hours by email and we will all endeavour to provide the best care we can in the circumstances.

5. Free School Meals

Our plan for this was to offer supermarket vouchers to families but the government are now suggesting this may be done centrally by them. As soon as we have details, I will pass these on. If this is not in place by next week, the college kitchen will be providing packed lunches to collect from reception daily as an interim measure.

Thank you, as ever, for your support and understanding. Please look after yourselves and each other. I will keep in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Newton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alex Newton
Principal