



Alameda Middle School

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3rd July 2020

Weekly Update

Dear parents and carers,

I write this introduction following a socially distancing walk around the school site. During my short tour, I observed so many happy pupils who were all engaged in the many different activities. Staff were delivering numerous fun lessons even though many were delivering topics they have not taught previously. Where I sit now I can see pupils completely engaged in their learning on google classroom. It is fantastic to see the commitment from everyone! With Design and Technology being my area, I feel I must also use this opportunity to comment to everyone on how the work coming in over google classroom and email is stunning! From the dinners and cakes our students are preparing at home, the sock puppets created, or the designs like isometric and perspective drawings produced I am in awe of the talent we have at this school. Please do continue to send in your work.

Over the next few pages, you will find some further information which you may find useful.

Requesting a Key Worker Place

If you are a key worker and have no alternative childcare for your child, particularly now as we understand some people are returning to work, you can request a place at school.

To do this, please email office@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk

We ask that you provide the following information in your email:

1. Your name and the names and year groups of pupils requiring a place/places
2. The days that places will be required
3. Details of your key worker role – your job title and place of work
4. A named person (ideally a line manager) at your place of work that we can contact if necessary.

We are keen to ensure that all key workers are supported and would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your contribution throughout this – whether front line NHS or providing essential services elsewhere.

Plan for Year 8 pupils to return to Alameda – update from Miss Warner

Last week, we wrote to families of year 6 and year 8 pupils to consult on our proposal for year 8 to return for the last week of term (13th July). The returns indicate that this will be possible. We received responses from a number of you and have written separately to those who did not respond to say that in order to enable us to plan, if we haven't heard otherwise by Monday 6th July, we will presume that your child is not going to attend.

To clarify, following some queries on this, we would love for all pupils to be able to be back, but even with some relaxation within the guidelines, this is still not something we can do. While the guidance does state that primary schools (and middle schools) can begin to look at opening to wider year groups, it does also specify year 6 as a priority year group. Any changes can, therefore, only be done following consultation with parents and carers of children in year 6. We will still need to cater for a small number of year 6 pupils whose parents and carers have requested this. We will also, of course, run our key worker groups. The last week was chosen as we have been advised that any change should be done over a weekend to allow time for cleaning between groups and also a 72 hour gap to further reduce any risks of transmission.

You will appreciate that a maximum of a week is not enough time to make significant academic progress and with other groups in school we are not able to accommodate all of year 8 for the whole week. Parents and carers of year 8 pupils will receive a separate letter, but the plan is for Monday and Tuesday to be for small numbers of year 8 pupils who have a particular need identified. This will link in with Redborne who are working with small numbers of pupils with special educational needs on transition.

Groups of year 8 will then be invited in for part days on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Times and further details will follow as they are currently being finalised. We are trying to link groups with form tutors as much as possible but are also working to avoid different groups being in the same classrooms as this would go against the advice we have been given. All of our plans are subject to approval by our health and safety consultant and our governors and we will share more as soon as we have this final approval confirmed.

One of our major concerns that we want to flag with parents is about the journeys to and from school and any congregations after the school day. While we will be planning to enforce social distancing within school, we must ask that parents and carers support in making sure that the pupils do not then congregate elsewhere around the town after school as sometimes happens at the end of term. We will be making a staggered start and finish times part of our plan and will be asking for your support with this.

Summer break and September – update from Miss Warner

As you will be aware, guidance for school provision in September was published yesterday and we are working on this at present. We have always been committed to re-opening school as widely as possible and will continue to do this. The whole team at Alameda have been keen to get pupils back to school and have not been impacted by the negative response of some of the unions as reported in the media. We will update you on plans for September as soon as possible.

We are also working on our recovery plan to support learning in the longer term for all of our pupils. This involves quite a lot of curriculum work as while we know you have been doing an amazing job at home, we will be making sure we support with any lost learning. We really don't like the phrase "catch up" as it implies pupils are "behind". This isn't good for anyone's self-esteem. This has been (and continues to be) a really difficult time and we are working hard to make sure everyone's wellbeing and long term learning is supported.

Over the summer, so that we can provide a quality provision in September, we will be closing school from Monday 20th July. You will see that this is in line with the announcement made by Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for education earlier

this week. We will not set work on Google Classroom over the summer as we believe the children also need a break but we will be setting the "Alameda Challenge" – a series of ideas and activities for our pupils to try. Anyone who can show they have completed these when they return in September will receive an award. More details will follow over the next two weeks. Our applications such as mathsPad and Maths Watch will still be available should anyone want to use those, there is also Oak National Academy.

Activities to support home learning

Pupils at home continue to make excellent efforts to complete the set work for them. We are working hard to support any issues or difficulties and have seen an increase this week in engagement. We appreciate it is very hard to maintain motivation and to keep going having been independent learners for many weeks but we would really like to congratulate all those who continue to submit work.

We are continuing to set activities on **Google Classroom** and our staff have been working hard to improve aspects of the virtual learning experience.

Here is a reminder of how you can access the user guide.

<http://www.alamedamiddleschool.org.uk/page/default.asp?pid=216>.

Remember that support can also be gained by contacting us at ithelp@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk.

Free School Meals

As we advised last week, we understand that for some of our parents, circumstances may have changed recently and you may now be eligible for free school meals. If you think you may be eligible you can review more information here.

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/53/benefits/4/free_school_meals

Please also see the updated government guidance on **keeping children safe online**.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

Models and other practical projects

We have a number of fantastic models, such as those the pupils have produced of Favelas, castles, imaginary animals etc. These are wonderful and have often received wow awards. In preparation for September, we are going to need to clear classrooms and create space and would, therefore, need to dispose of any unclaimed models at the end of this term. If there is a model you would like to have returned, we will work with you to arrange to collect it. Please email office@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk indicating your child's name and form, a description of the model and the name of the member of staff who is most likely to have it.

Exercise books

We will be organising a system which will hopefully enable us to return exercise books to year 8 pupils who would like to keep them. This will need to be part of our risk assessment and wider planning as we will need to do it safely. Pupils in years 5, 6 and 7 will continue with their current exercise books into the next academic year.

And finally

The last few months have brought much uncertainty and change to our personal lives and how our schools operate. We face similar over the coming months but please rest assured that myself and the whole team will be working hard to support your children.

Yours sincerely

Paul Henry
Senior Leader and DT Subject Leader
On behalf of the Alameda senior leadership team