



Tuesday 24 March 2020

Dear Tallis students, parents and carers,

We've tried to keep you informed every day so far, but there will probably be a bit of a pause after this letter. It is hard to know what to do for the best but it seems sensible now to let the things we've put in place run for a couple of days, take some feedback and then review.

This letter, therefore, is about helping you as parents and students make a bit of sense of what Tallis is expecting of you, and what you can expect of us. Of course, none of us know how the next few weeks are going to be, or how many of us may not be able to work or communicate for a while during that time.

May we just say that while it is important to develop a sense of routine, and complete as much school work as possible, we are using a wide range of distance learning styles. Some departments in some years (science, for example) are trying to do real-time work during the actual lesson slots. Others are putting work on Insight that you can use in lesson time or at other times. We want to be flexible because this will also help us be resilient, no matter what happens.

This letter is NOT about GCSE or A level assessment. We don't know any more detail about that yet. We'll tell you when we do. Mr Curtis-Brignell is keeping a close eye on this. Mr Tomlin has been thinking about well-being more generally and most of this letter is written by him.

So, we realise that the next few weeks are going to be challenging for you and your family. We want you to look after yourself if you are a student, and understand our expectations about school work if you are a parent or carer.

Young children might enjoy being off school for a while but it is likely to be trying for older children and their families. Losing the daily structure of school and not having anything urgent to do may lead to boredom and arguments. It might affect everyone's mental health at an already stressful time. Further, there's lots of evidence to show that after a long break from school, student learning and attainment doesn't stand still but can actually go backwards. We don't want that to happen if we can help it, so it is really important that students keep learning.

Here are 5 top tips for students and their families!

1. **Try to stick to the normal school timetable** as much as possible. Look at the online work when you would normally be in that lesson if you can. This will give each day a structure that will help you keep motivated. Go to bed and get up at normal times. Try to set up a quiet space to work and, if there are more children than quiet spaces, set up a rotation!
2. **Keep learning.** Doing the work set will help keep you focused and motivated. Your teachers will have put the work they are expecting you to do for each of your timetabled lessons on Insight or Microsoft Teams. They will expect students to have completed it all when school starts up again, so it is very important to keep going. If you are in year 10 or 12, remember there will be limited time to finish your exam courses when you return.
3. **Exercise every day.** There are lots of suggestions on the Tallis home learning website (link below) as it is a vital part of maintaining both physical and mental health even when isolated at home. Jo Wicks, for example, also does an excellent live YouTube workout every morning at 0900 if you need that little extra motivation.
4. **Keep in contact and check your school email daily.** Your tutor will email every week. Email them back to let them know how you are. If you don't understand the work or want feedback, email your teachers and ask for help. *You need to remember your school Office 365 login to email. If you can't, guidance is on the website. You'll need to email the helpdesk*

5. **Look after your whole self.** This doesn't just mean following the advice on social distancing and washing your hands. Having a structure to your day will help maintain mental health. It is also important to keep socially active by having video calls with friends and maintaining a variety of activities in the day, for example, cooking, board games, reading fiction, organising things, being creative etc. Some examples of family 'challenge' activities are also available on our home learning site.

Tallis's main home learning page is <https://www.thomastallischool.com/schoolclosuresresources.html>. We will update this regularly with resources and guidance, so refer back to it regularly. Here is an idea of the types of things that can be found there:

- Daily challenge activities for families and students like fun games, 30-day challenges
- Links for maintaining physical fitness for families and students such as fitness challenges and links to exercise videos etc.
- Links to support mental health and emotional wellbeing for students including confidential child support services, self-help, Kooth etc
- Guidance on talking to children of different ages about coronavirus for parents
- Links to subject resources, workbooks, GCSE Pod and a large variety of other online learning resources.
- Links for careers guidance (particularly important for years 11 and 13)

Please do visit this site and use the guidance on offer. We hope it will make the time away from school easier for all concerned.

Please don't hesitate to contact tutors, heads of year or teachers if you need support. Do bear in mind that some are ill and many have their own families to care for and may not reply immediately.

We will write again on Friday, or before if there is anything new or urgent to report.

Please all stay safe, keep calm and carry on!

Carolyn Roberts, Ashley Tomlin and Jon Curtis-Brignell