



27th March 2020

Important Dates

March

29 **CLOCKS GO FORWARD 1 HOUR AT 0100**

30-10 Apr **SCHOOL SPRING HOLIDAY**

▶ **From the Head of School**

Dear Parents,

When we decided to close the campus and move to a virtual school, we debated whether to continue with Thistle Talk. Of course, Thistle Talk at the end of the week is normal; but so much isn't normal any more. Things as they were. But we will move to a new normal; one that will get us through the uncertain times ahead.

So Thistle Talk is something from before that we will carry on in our virtual school. Like so much else, it won't be the same. Elementary still had their weekly assembly last Monday but it was online, with teachers pretending to be the kids in the audience. It was recorded in advance; with the lockdown, the next one will be different still. This week students have continued to check in with their teachers each morning; had lessons; completed tasks; talked with classmates. But they haven't physically met up.

We have all spent the week setting on new routines, getting used to a new reality. I have been impressed and touched with the positive attitudes right across our community: from parents, from staff and from students. Students have coped with connection problems, screen freezes but also "managing to remember to be at the right class", "not seeing friends, distractions at home" and "staying in the same place for the whole day". But they have also told us, "it's been new and exciting". "Interesting and different", "actually quite fun" and "a cool way of learning". Teachers have been trying out new things: more visuals, use of video clips, different ways to present. One student told us, there is "more freedom and more conversation".

Both the excitement and the nervousness about the virtual school will wear off. We will get more and more used to teaching and learning within it, and we will do it better. The students are learning, so are the teachers. So is the school. These are trying times, but we will keep going, making the best of a new normal, preparing the next generation. We will stick together: an ISA community.

Best regards,

Nicholas Little
Head of School

► From the MS/HS Principal

Dear Middle/High School Parents,

This has been a very challenging few weeks for our students. Events that had been months, or even years in the planning have folded one by one and had to be dismantled carefully to mitigate the impact of those decisions. These have included some MS trips, the HS Activities Week and both sets of external exams, and I am sure there will be further disappointments next semester if the building remains closed. As I write, we are waiting to hear from CIE and IBO on what, if anything, they need from us to award their qualifications. That news will allow a clearer direction for both Grades 10 and 12 after the break to be identified. I greatly appreciate your patience with this, particularly as we are scheduled to have mock and/or semester exams for Grade 10 in the near future.

However, a positive to emerge from all of this has been the Virtual School and our community's response to it. The synchronous approach is giving students a sense of order and routine, allowing them to continue learning and interact with peers. The recent surveys that went to stakeholders will help us further improve the set-up after the break, and I believe Virtual School will be integral in giving a sense of connectedness and normality at a time of great uncertainty.

The house arrest we find ourselves observing is giving an opportunity to reflect on our lifestyles and, inevitably, is pushing us towards a 'simpler' existence. It has been heartening to see so many families out together for their exercise, and we are fortunate to be in a part of the world that is relatively sparsely populated with plenty of green spaces. Coronavirus headlines have replaced those about climate change but, perhaps, when we come out the other side of the current crisis, we will find we have developed a healthier work-life balance and a lower impact lifestyle.

Doubtless you are seeing a great deal of wellbeing guidance, but I wanted to share these ideas from CAS Trips who work specifically with teenagers.

1. Listen to podcasts to enhance your learning. We especially enjoyed the [Ted Talks Daily](#) episode [How to turn climate anxiety into action](#). Who knows, maybe it will inspire your next service project.
2. Participate in free online workout and yoga classes to stay fit - both physically and mentally. [Barry's Bootcamp](#) and [Shona Vertue](#) are two of many offering home workouts right now.
3. Anxiety grows in times like these. Use a meditation app, such as [Headspace](#), [Breathr](#) or [Smiling Mind](#), to take care of your mind, body and soul.
4. Test and enhance your second language skills on [Babbel](#) or [Duolingo](#).
5. Call your grandparents - they always appreciate it. Even more so in times like these.
6. Maintain your routine. Follow your original class schedule to stay in the learning flow.
7. Start a digital book club with your English class and stay on top of the reading list. You could use [Skype](#) or [Zoom](#) to meet and discuss the most recent page-turner.
8. Use [YouTube](#) to learn a new hobby - whether that's DJing or [baking with Georgia](#) is totally up to you!
9. Spend time researching where you might want to go to [university](#), or how you want to plan your [gap year](#) to truly make a difference.
10. Party on the weekend. Many musicians and DJs are live streaming their concerts on YouTube, Instagram and other platforms. Check out [Bandsintown Live](#) for inspiration, hook up your best speakers, dim the bedroom lights and party like no-one is watching. Because no-one is :).

I hope you have a restful break and stay healthy. Do encourage your children to reach out to friends and relatives to stay connected.

Angus Carmichael
MS/HS Principal

▶ **From the Elementary Principal**

Dear Parents,

The build up to the virtual schooling has been very demanding and the actual implementation very intensive, especially for our teachers. The feedback we've received from many of you has been so positive and has reassured us all that learning is continuing at home. It's also helped to guide us in making appropriate adjustments to the 'virtual' day. Most heartwarming are the messages we've received that the children are missing their teachers and friends and that 'real' school is much better! We wholeheartedly agree.

The Learning Grids set out before 8:00pm each night are providing an outline of the activities/expectations each day. They also have links to extra provisions for student learning. This is particularly true from Thursday, where there are countless links to ideas/activities students can do over the two-week holiday when we are all still on 'Lockdown'. Family time, where everyone has restricted movement, creates a number of challenges for all of us. Trying to stay in touch with loved ones, helping children to stay in touch with their friends, keeping supplies of food in stock, and perhaps carrying on with a job (while at home), is hard work.

These are not normal times and every family is working through the best way to stay safe while managing their needs each and every day. Clearly, any glance at the news reminds us of the importance of staying at home and supporting the other government initiatives to end the Coronavirus.

During the holiday we are instructing our staff to look after themselves, move away from the countless hours of screen time virtual learning requires, see to their own families, and also find ways to relax during the two-week holiday by avoiding work-related activities, including responding to non-essential emails.

Usually I end a message before a holiday by saying enjoy lots of family fun and create special memories. This time the message is still the same, but with a caveat that family fun and special memories are now more than ever reliant on our spirit, creativity, and determination to make the most of a challenging situation. There is some comfort in that we are all in the same situation. Be sure to take advantage of the numerous suggestions made on various learning grids. In addition, countless resources are regularly being made available online and only require simple search lines such as '*Stuck at Home*'.

At ISA, I feel blessed to be part of such a caring community that has always come together to support each other.

Stay well and stay safe. Tell those lovely children of yours that we all look forward to hearing their holiday stories when we return on 13th April.

Best regards,

Don Newbury,
Elementary Principal

▶ From the Guidance Counsellor

Dear ISA Families,

I've enjoyed working with the students this year on a variety of social emotional topics and look forward to supporting our students in the virtual school this Spring at ISA. Please remember that entering virtual school will be similar to going through the phases of culture shock:

Phase One: **The Honeymoon Phase.** Initially the students will be excited about not having to take the bus and travel to school so early. They will have more time with their pets, social media, and leisure activities. At first, this feels pretty exciting!

Phase Two: **The Frustration Phase.** The students start to miss their friends and social activities. They are worried about what they are seeing in the news regarding the coronavirus. They start to ask questions about when the social distancing will end.

Phase Three: **The Adjustment Phase.** Virtual learning is feeling more normal. The students are talking to their trusted adults about worries. They are finding new ways to have fun with hobbies, exercise, and social connections.

Phase Four: **The Acceptance Phase.** I am resilient. I know how to learn and connect in different ways. I am successful.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if I can help with any resources or guidance this Spring!

Warm Regards,

Valerie DeGraw

Guidance Counsellor

valerie.degraw@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk

"Instruction does much, but encouragement everything"

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Well done everyone for the first week of ISA Virtual School! It's great to see everyone embracing the technology needed to make this work!

A few points from me:

Virtual School Information

Remember the [Virtual School Site](#) is the main port of call for all information. Daily notices are posted here as well as all the guidelines & help required to join in with the Virtual School and up to date information on wellbeing. As the Virtual School continues we will be adding to this further.

Device Problems

A lot of device problems occur if devices are never properly shut down. Please try and get into the habit of shutting down your laptop or Chromebook every night (not just closing the lid!) and starting fresh the next morning. If you have a problem, try a restart. If you still have a problem, contact itsupport@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk.

Internet Connection Problems

Some of you are having Internet Connection problems. Do get in touch if this is hindering your ability to take part in classes. A couple of things to think about:

- Where are you working? Could you move nearer to the router to get a stronger signal?
- What exactly is the issue? If it is mostly an issue with video on Google Meet you can change the quality which might improve the situation - see [this link](#).

Cyber Scams

Cyber criminals are [preying on fears of the coronavirus](#) and sending 'phishing' emails that try and trick users into clicking on a bad link. Once clicked, the user is sent to a dodgy website which could download malware onto your computer, or steal passwords. The scams may claim to have a 'cure' for the virus, offer a financial reward, or be encouraging you to donate.

Like many phishing scams, these emails are preying on real-world concerns to try and trick people into doing the wrong thing. Please refer to [guidance on dealing with suspicious emails](#) to learn more about spotting and dealing with phishing emails.

For genuine information about the virus, please only use trusted resources such as the Public Health England or NHS websites.

If you have any other issues, questions or suggestions please do get in touch by email: g.veitch@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk - I am here to help!

Gayle Veitch

Head of IT

Thistle Talk is a great way to find out what is going on in the school, but you can get a lot more from our social media sites. Log into us at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-school-aberdeen> and <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSchoolAberdeen/> and get the stories behind the stories.

NEWS FROM YOUR PTO

MAR 27 2020



ISA Parent Teacher Organisation



pto@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk

WHERE TO START.....

Dear all. I think it is safe to say life as we know it, has been turned upside down. Completely. No one knows how long this situation will continue and what impact it will have on the long term. To make sure we keep supporting each other, we would like to use this weekly page to share some examples and ideas on what to do in these uncertain times to make sure we stay positive. If you have any suggestions, let us know.

#I SPY A RAINBOW

Click the picture to access the story

P.E. WITH JOE

Monday 23rd March



P.E. WITH JOE

Starting Monday 23rd March, Joe will be hosting a free 30-minute workout aimed at kids LIVE on his YouTube channel daily. With the schools closed and with us all spending more time at home, it's more important than ever that we keep moving and stay healthy and positive. The workouts will be fun and suitable for all ages and even adults can get involved.

#APRILLOVE2020 SUSANNAH CONWAY

Unexpected and unusual things are happening in our world right now and the majority of us are holed up at home to help protect others. I have started a very gentle photo challenge to help bring creative mindfulness to our days. This is the "home edition" — you should be able to photograph something at home every day.

APRIL
LOVE
2020

PTO ENRICHMENTS & APPLICATIONS

Although we have suspended most of the remaining PTO activities, we still ask you to submit your enrichment requests (deadline extended until May 31st, 2020) and PTO job applications. Please use the links on both sides of this block. If you have any questions, please reach out. Jobs we have up for grabs are: Secretary, Treasurer, Spirit Wear Coordinator, Spirit Wear Associate, Elementary School CEC Representative, Fundraising Coordinator and Buddy Coordinator. Stay safe! Stay healthy!

