



Dear Parents and Caregivers

Here we go again - just when I thought I could give you a couple of days breather from my incessant letters!

As you probably know, state schools will move to five student free days next week when staff will be expected to attend school (unless they are vulnerable) and do professional development with online learning as the focus.

At Saint Stephen's our teachers are already highly competent in the area of online learning, given the huge amount of PD they have done over a number of years and the teaching in which they are all currently engaged. We believe that any further professional development of this nature at this time is unnecessary. I also cannot see the benefit of having planning days next week, as we have no idea what directives may come out during the two-week holiday, but we will take three pupil free days (not two as previously stated) at the start of next term to prepare for exceptional lesson delivery in Term Two, no matter what the platform. **Therefore, online learning at Saint Stephen's will continue next week.** The week will not be an extension of the holidays. This is how teaching and learning will look for the week 30 March to 3 April:

- Parents are encouraged to keep their children at home as per the Premier's directive. We will supervise children of all those who work in essential services, the current definition of which is 'have a job'. The continuation of educating your children during these uncertain times is our highest priority.
- On-campus students will meet at the start of the day (8.20am latest) to direct them to their venues:
 - P to Year 6: East Playground
 - Year 7 to Year 12: GFA
- We anticipate that we will have very few students on campus and they will be accommodated in groups around the campus. This will probably look as follows: P to Year 3 (1H classroom); Year 4 to Year 6 (QW 1 and 2); Year 7 to 12 (iCentre), depending on numbers of course.
- Students will be supervised by a mixture of learning assistants and teachers in the Junior College, and iCentre staff in Years 7 to 12. Thus freeing up teachers to focus on their online teaching and planning.
- Supervision of students entails ensuring that they are safe and doing their work, no face-to-face teaching will be done.
- We will follow the timetable as we are currently doing with a few tweaks to pastoral care lessons and the like.

Please be aware that Childcare, OHSC and vacation care facilities are still available at this time and will remain open to support families until such time as we are directed to shut. There has been no indication that this on the cards yet.

If your child/ren WILL BE attending school next week on campus, please go to the following link to provide details. Please do this by 1pm Friday 27 March, so that we can make appropriate staffing arrangements.

Developing character, inspiring hope

Please rest assured that no matter the circumstances, no matter the forum, your children will continue to be taught in an engaged, challenging and professional manner by the dedicated teachers at Saint Stephen's College.

Junior College (from Ms Leith Biggs, Dean of Junior College)

Now that the majority of students will be studying at home, Off-campus Learning (OCL) will be provided across all year levels as a whole. This means that we will have one teacher a day doing the OCL for the year level while the other two teachers prepare content. The role of the OCL teachers will rotate across the year level team. This approach allows us to share the expertise of our teaching teams

The OCL teacher will communicate the daily program to the students at home and respond to the needs of the students during the day. A year level email address has been created and this will be attended to during the school day by the OCL teacher. Each year level will include the email address in their communication on Monday morning.

The role of the OCL teacher changes daily so the children will see all their year level teachers throughout the week. Each teacher in a year level will have access to all students' work so the monitoring of each student is maintained and the teachers have a record of the progress of the students in their own class.

Our Junior College staff are exceptional teachers and take the education of each individual student very seriously. They have devised some exciting ways to educate your children over this time. I encourage you to sit next to your child and see our online teaching and learning in action. It really is first class. Please know that we are here for you during this period as we always are when your children are on campus.

Senior College (from Ms Kate Naug, Director of Studies)

The Senior College is fully prepared for Off-campus Learning. For the remainder of Term One, students in Years 7to12 are required to follow their daily school timetable and attend each lesson online. Joining a lesson via *Microsoft Teams* will enable a roll to be marked, and provide an opportunity for students to communicate with their teacher through the live video function and/or the discussion forum. Furthermore, detailed instructions for what lesson content is to be covered will be posted on the homepage for each subject in D2L. Students can submit assignments through the drop-box on D2L. Those with *Flex* lessons can use this time for study or assignment work, as they would do if they were on campus.

Your and your family's wellbeing (from Mr James Evans-McLeod, College Counsellor)

It can feel stressful and overwhelming during an event like the outbreak of COVID-19 and we can all be affected differently. You might feel overwhelmed by the information, conversations and the increased levels of stress in your community.

It's important to find the right level or type of support for you. And keep in mind that the type of support you may need can change as time passes. Worrying about diseases is a normal reaction. But, excessive worrying about infectious diseases can affect both our physical and our mental health. Here are some tips for wellbeing during these trying times.

Set limits around news and social media

It's understandable to want to keep informed and prepared. At the same time, constantly reading, watching, or listening to upsetting media coverage can unnecessarily intensify worry and agitation. People tend to talk about things they are worried about which can create even more stress. Give yourself permission to switch off from social media & news. When you get the urge to check updates, see if you can pause, notice the urge, delay acting on the urge, and let it pass without judgement. Schedule a specific time to check in with the news instead.

Access reputable information

Relying on news from mainstream or social media, which often sensationalises or exaggerates issues, can further increase our stress and anxiety. One way to manage our reactions is to access the 'right information'. Consider only accessing trusted sources of information (ABC Radio, Australian Government Department of Health website, World Health Organisation website).

Balance your thoughts

With an absence of information in an uncertain situation, our anxious mind will often fill in the blanks with worst case scenarios, leaving us feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or vulnerable. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to shift your thinking from catastrophizing to a more helpful mindset:

- *What are the things within my control?*
- *Am I overestimating the likelihood of the worst-case scenario?*
- *What strategies have helped me cope with challenging situations in the past that will serve me well during this time?*
- *What is a small helpful or positive action that I can take now?*

Uphold a practical approach including learning how to protect yourself

Widespread panic can complicate efforts to manage the outbreak effectively. Do your best to stay calm and follow official advice, particularly around observing good hygiene habits. The Australian Department of Health has recommended [important actions](#) we can all take to protect against infection and prevent the virus from spreading including [practising good hygiene](#), [self-isolation](#), and [social distancing](#)

Keep healthy routines

Having a healthy routine can have a positive impact on your thoughts and feelings. Go back to basics: eating healthy meals, appropriate exercise, [getting enough sleep](#), and doing things you enjoy.

Strategies to cope with social distancing or self-isolation

Going into a period of social distancing or self-isolation may feel daunting or overwhelming, and can contribute to feelings of helplessness and fear. Therefore a key strategy for wellbeing is to stay connected and engaged with people that are meaningful to you. You might have to modify how you stay connected, for example, using Skype or Facetime instead of face-to-face visits. If there is someone you think may struggle through social isolation, it is important to reach out to them and let them know you care: Call them to check on their welfare or send an email. Remember – we are all in this together. Don't underestimate the power you have to offer hope to another person

Try to maintain perspective

While it is reasonable to be concerned about the outbreak of COVID-19, try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

Talking to your children

Please click [this link](#) for tips around how to talk to your children if they are worried about the current situation.

Further links

<https://www.psychology.org.au/COVID-19-Australians>

<https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/support-for-those-impacted-by-adverse-events/mental-health-support-for-covid-19>

If your children are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, please contact James on jevansmcleod@ssc.qld.edu.au to make an appointment for them to touch base either in person or online.

May God bless and keep you and your families safe during these trying times.

Holy Spirit, as families adjust to everyone being home as businesses and schools close, we ask that You guide people in their new realities.

Give spouses and partners grace for each other.

Prompt worn-out parents to speak words of kindness and encouragement to their children. Help children find creative ways to experience the beauty of all You have created and continue learning.

In your name we pray, Amen

With kind regards

Kim Cohen
Principal