This month at SBL Academy

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for working with us to facilitate continuity of learning during these unprecedented times we are all contending with.

As a school it is our responsibility to provide an educational provision for our students, and we are keen not to overburden parents and carers in supporting children to complete home study in these already challenging times. I am grateful to the number of families who have contacted me to thank our staff for providing easily accessible daily work for your children to complete. I have shared your positive messages with our staff who have been lifted by your kind words, as the majority of my staff are also getting to grips with working in isolation at home. I have also received communication from a small number of parents who are keen to supplement some of the work set by subject teachers with their own ideas for home study. There is no expectation for you to do this, but if you are in a position to facilitate this, and you feel this is providing a purposeful educational experience, I am happy to support this as we enter this period of protracted home learning.

Understandably, many parents and carers have contacted school to ascertain how their child/children can engage in feedback from the teacher. During Phase 1 of the forced closure, 23 March – 03 April, we directed our teaching staff to include a starter activity in the next lesson, if possible, to provide an opportunity for feedback on the previous lesson’s learning at home. On the homepage of our website, there is also a link to a presentation shared with students on Friday 20 March. Please click on the middle tile in the right bar: School Closure: Home Based Learning. Students have been advised to use their Gmail account if they need to contact any of their teachers if they need specific subject support or feedback to complete their studies.

As we move into Term 5 of this protracted period of closure, I would like to outline how we aim to provide continuity of learning at home:

- **Years 7-10 and Year 12** subject teachers will continue to set work for students using Insight to outline the content of the work. In most subjects, teachers will continue to upload additional resources using Google platforms such as Google Classroom

- **Students in Years 7-10 and Year 12** will complete an assessed piece of work mid-way through Term 5 across their subjects and will receive electronic feedback from their teacher by the end of the term.
• **Students in KS3 (Years 7–9)** have been provided with an exercise book to complete any hard copy work across their subjects. As this has become a more protracted period of home learning, if your child needs an additional exercise book, please contact the school to arrange collection of an additional book from our reception at a time when you feel it is safe and appropriate to leave the home. Work completed in this book will be shared, celebrated and rewarded using our House Point system with tutors in the first instance when students return to school.

• **Students in Year 10** will also have the additional opportunity to engage in GCSEPod as we have invested in this software and will be launching this innovative online resource in Term 5. I have included a brief outline of the benefits of GCSE Pod following this Principal’s update and a link to their website if you are reading this electronically.

• **Year 11** - we have recently completed an audit, and subject specific work will continue to be set and feedback provided for those students who are intending to study a subject[s] at Post-16. We will also provide bridging work for subsequent post-16 steps for all students, as it is crucial students continue to engage in learning, developing important lifelong communication skills, such as keeping abreast of world affairs or completing a letter of application. These are vital lifelong skills we will endeavour to furnish our students with at this transition point into post-16 provision.

• **Year 13 students** will also be provided with bridging work for next steps into Higher Education or their first career steps. It is crucial for students to continue developing their ability to be excellent communicators and to keep abreast of world affairs. These are important lifelong skills we will endeavour to furnish our students with at this transition point into adult life, the world of work and university.

We are also striving to create a culture of reading at SBL academy and I’m sure you will agree this period of home study provides a perfect opportunity for students to engage with literature. Before this period of closure, we encouraged as many students as possible to borrow books from our newly stocked school library. Parents and carers of Year 7 students will also know we have invested in the Accelerated Reader Programme. Accelerated Reader is a software tool used to monitor reading. It enables students of all abilities to improve their reading and comprehension skills by guiding them to books at an appropriate level for them. Students periodically take a ‘STAR’ reading test and this provides an up-to-date reading age to allow students to read books in their ‘challenge zone’ or Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). To maximise the benefit of this programme, students should read for 20 minutes every day. I would encourage parents and carers of Year 7 students to read the Accelerated Reader article included in this edition of On the Radar if you would like to know more about this exciting programme.

Finally, from scrutinising Insight usage data, I have been impressed with the engagement the majority of our students have demonstrated in their learning and how quickly our school community has adapted to a new way of working. This transition would not have been as positive without the home support you are providing to facilitate this. Again a huge thank you from me and on behalf of all staff at SBL Academy.

Mr D Anderson  
Principal
What is GCSEPod?

GCSEPod makes it easy to learn and revise wherever students are, on any device, and is particularly suited to remote learning. Through the GCSEPods, students will be supported to build knowledge in sequences, enabling the students to retain more knowledge to importantly recall it when they need to.

The Benefits of GCSEPod:

- Learning and assessment, anywhere, at any time
- Rich curriculum cover of all of our subjects mapped against exam preparation
- Content is rigourously Quality Assured by GCSE experts in the different subject fields, supported by a wealth of case studies from other schools where this intervention has had a demonstrable positive impact on GCSE outcomes
- Real time tracking and monitoring of student and teacher activity
- Assessment for learning, not just testing

A further update and guidance for students, parents and carers of Year 10 students will be provided at the beginning of Term 5 to ensure we can maximise the benefits of GCSEPod.

Student leadership

The final day before we closed the school was a particularly emotional one for our Year 11s and the student leadership team who have led the student body so impressively over the course of this year. Before they left, the Year 11s took the opportunity to enjoy some food in the canteen before signing each other’s shirts and then thanking the teachers who have worked so hard to support them this year.

The Year 11 student leadership team have achieved a great deal over the course of terms 1-4. They played a key role in the installation of new toilets and drinking fountains at the start of the year, made inspirational speeches at our open day and have led the school council in fortnightly meetings. This has meant that they were able to truly represent students in all year groups and ensure that their voices were heard.

It has been a pleasure working with the student leadership team and I want to wish them all the best in their future endeavours. They are a truly impressive group of young people and a real credit to their school.

Mr Jones, Assistant Principal

School Nurse Information

The school health nurse for SBL is Alli Fry. Parents are able to contact the school nursing service for advice and information on 01454 862202 for support around many issues including mental health, emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships, sexual health and healthy lifestyles.
Accelerated Reader
A Guide for Year 7 Parents and Carers

What is Accelerated Reader?
Accelerated Reader is a software tool used to monitor reading. It enables students of all abilities to improve their reading and comprehension skills by guiding them to books at an appropriate level for them.

Students in Year 7 all took a STAR test at the beginning of the academic year, to establish their STAR reading level. Students then choose a book at the correct level and once they finish a book, they take an online quiz. The results of this gives both children and staff feedback on their comprehension of the book. We can then use this information to help set targets and determine whether they need to find reading material at a different level.

The more a child reads, the more quizzes they pass leading to a sense of success and achievement. They also gain points for each book completed and quizzed, which can lead to rewards.

What is a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)?
ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Each child has a unique ZPD, or reading range after taking the STAR Reading test. Students have now been given a reading level range to choose books from. These have been colour-coded in the library to make it easy for students to find the correct levels. We have directed students to the lower levels of their ZPD range to start with, to see how well they do with quizzing, and then we can look at quiz results to determine whether they should also read from the higher levels within their range. Each student has been told two colours to choose books from. They can still read books from other colours and ones without AR quizzes, but need to try to stick within their given colours in general.

What are points?
Every book that has an AR Reading Practice Quiz is given a points value. AR points are based on the length of the book (number of words). Pupils earn a percentage of points according to how well they pass the quiz.

How can I help my child become a better reader?
Renaissance Learning’s research has revealed that children who read for more than 20 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. Encourage your child to read at home, discuss books, ask questions about what they have read and visit your local library. Show them that adults read too by modelling the behaviour– whether it’s a paper book, an e–reader, a magazine, or a newspaper; all reading is good reading.

How and when are quizzes taken?
As soon as your child finishes a book, they can take the quiz on it. It is best to do it while the story is fresh in their minds so that they don’t forget what has happened and then score badly.

There is a link on RMUnify called Renaissance Place, which is where all quizzing is done. This also shows students’ ZPD range, books quizzed on in the past, and much more. Students have been shown how to login and the information is also on Insight. Guidance on how to take an Accelerated Reader quiz is also included at the end of this article.

Can students read their own books from home and other libraries?
Yes, but it is important to always have one book on the go that is at the right level. You can use the Bookfinder website www.arbookfind.co.uk to check if the book is on the scheme. Make a record of the quiz number and complete the quiz once the book has been read.

All books that have been included in the AR scheme can be searched online on the website: www.arbookfind.co.uk. You can search for books within the correct level or you can search for a particular title and check the Book Level.
The information provided for each book includes an “I.L” which is the interest level of a book, so you would be looking for MY and MY+ (Middle Years). It also shows the “B.L” which is the Book Level.

Use the colour chart to find your AR Book Level as a number so that you can borrow books from other libraries, buy in bookshops, and read on e-readers. The colour code is exclusive to SBL Library so please do not look for this colour elsewhere. The numbers are universal.

For more information, take a look at the Renaissance website and read this document: What parents need to know about Accelerated Reader.

How to take an Accelerated Reader Quiz
You can take a quiz every time you finish a book, and you gain points for each quiz you take which will eventually count towards rewards.

Follow these instruction below to take a quiz...
- The link to take quizzes is here: https://ukhosted110.renlearn.co.uk/6704668 and can also be found on RM Unify at the tile ‘Renaissance Place’.
- Your username is the first letter of your first name and the first four letters of your surname. For example, Harry Potter would login with the username: HPot

All passwords are set to abc

- Once you are logged in, you can search for a book in the top search bar using the title of the book or the quiz number.
- The Quiz number can be found on a sticker on the inside cover of all AR library books. When you open the book, on the bottom left hand side is a sticker which gives AR information about the book; the very first line is the Quiz number (usually six digits).
- Once you have found the book you want to quiz on, click “Take Quiz”
- Follow the instructions and answer all the questions. You will then be prompted to give the book a star rating before you receive your results.
- Make a note of what your score was and talk to Mrs Richards or your English teacher about it before choosing your next book, especially if you score lower than 85% as we may need to change your book level.

Science

Along with all CTLS at SBL Academy, I am extremely proud of the way in which we are continuing to deliver lessons for our young people at home, helping them to continue their progress at this challenging time. In science, the structure and organisation of our curriculum makes this possible along with the hard work and dedication of the Science team who continue to work hard developing resources and learning experiences for their students.

Prior to the school closure, we were delighted to send two of our ‘Science Speaks’ winners from last year to a Science Fair at Chandag Infants School. Lukara Robinson and Amelia Moran in Year 9 spoke to students about their research and inspired the children with stories of prominent women in science.

In recent news, as a science team we have also been pleased to donate a large number of our goggles to local walk-in clinics and the Bristol Community respiratory team who reached out to the Wellsway multi-academy trust. We hope that this equipment will serve in some way to keep the incredibly brave health-care professionals safe as they carry out their heroic jobs on a daily basis.