



Alexander Road High School

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South Africa

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Dear Alex Family members

Wars and rumors of wars

We face quite a lot of conflict in our world today. Devastating wars are playing out in several countries at once. It is heart-breaking to see the enormous amount of pain and suffering that people inflict on other people. We hold all the people who are facing these conflicts in our thoughts and prayers. Hoping that sanity will prevail and some end to the suffering can be found.

We faced our own small crisis this week when we became the target of a cyberattack. The perpetrators only seemed to be motivated by money. They initiated a ransomware programme that encrypts all the data on a hard drive and locks it up. If we pay the ransom, they promise to send the key to unlock. The software was initiated by one of our teachers clicking on a link in an email that seemed legitimate to them. It then infected the local hard drive and started moving through the network to our servers, locking all our servers and our backup servers up tight.

On Tuesday the same perpetrators took control of a server in the USA and used it to send so much data to our network that our server was unable to send any other data. It is like spraying someone in the face with a fire hose and asking them to talk to you. That is why none of you could get through to us on the phone on Tuesday. We managed to isolate the server and inform its owners, who then fixed the problem. The perpetrators then made several other attempts to remote control devices in the network, looking for a weak point.

We have managed to immunise all our devices against further spread. None of our finance or parent and pupil information was affected by the attack. These two sets of data have added layers of protection. We were lucky that they were not able to overcome those.

Our network is now safe from this particular piece of software. There could be new variants that could be modified in the future, that could make us vulnerable again.

We are not going to pay anyone. We are working with some forensic experts to see what we can do to recover the lost data. It might be the case that we have lost it for good and we will need to work hard to create it again.

We have learned a few life lessons in the process of being attacked. These may be helpful to you. Many businesses have been attacked in the city in a similar way, possibly by the same group or related groups as they seem to share the same attack strategy and similar software.

The attack came via an email, opened on the outlook application installed on a windows computer. We would have been safe if the person had been using the office 365 app for outlook inside a web browser.

Don't click on links, unless you are very sure that you can trust the sender. They have impersonated a bank, a magistrate, issuing a summons, a payroll, sending a payslip, SARS refunds and other, very convincing simulations.

Rather store your shared files in cloud storage solutions like OneDrive and Google Drive and similar. Local mapped network drives caused us a lot of damage.

If you can get your completed backups off the network by unplugging the backup server when not using it. If you can fit your personal data onto an external drive that stays unplugged, it will be safe from such an attack.

There is very little impact on the day to day running of the school, teachers are generating what they have lost as they need it, many teachers had already migrated to cloud storage and were not affected. Finances are safe and our administration data is safe.

We had a fantastic day out at the Oval on Monday during our Inter-House Athletics competition. My thanks to everyone who managed to join us for the day. A bit of early rain could not manage to dampen the spirit of the day.

My thanks to parents who were able to join us for grade meetings this week. It was wonderful to be able to spend a bit of time with you.

Grade 9 parents and guardians are invited on Wednesday 31 January and Grade 11 parents and guardians are invited on Thursday 1 February. Both meetings are at 17H00. Grade Heads will send the minutes out in case you cannot make it.

We invite you all to our academic awards assembly on Monday 12 February at 08H15. The names of the award winners are at the bottom of this newsletter. Academic achievement badges will be handed out at Grade assemblies on Friday next week. Grade assemblies are internal affairs and parents and guardians are not invited, but we love you all anyway. The names of the academic achievement badge winners will be published in next Friday's newsletter.

We are approaching our SGB elections in March this year. The School Governing Body is an essential part of the success of every state school. The SGB has members from the parent community, the pupils, the teaching and non-teaching staff and school management. They form the governance structure of the school. Writing policy and supporting managers in their roles. It is essential work. We need people who are willing to sacrifice some of their time to help secure the future of Alex and help steer the ship.

If you feel that you have a contribution to make, I would appreciate you making yourself available for the elections in March. Even if you don't have the time to help, please at least participate by meeting the nominated candidates and voting for your preferred candidate. The notice of the elections and calls for nominations will be sent out as soon as the provincial education department have mandated the details of the elections. Please start considering your availability or thinking about people that you know in our school who you think could help.

We have a wonderfully busy weekend planned. Band camp, cricket and waterpolo matches. Please support us if you can, the met office has promised us nice weather conditions.

Have a fine weekend and look after those you love this weekend.

Regards



Matthew Ridgway
Principal

Surname	Firstname	Grade in 2023
Baliso	Iviwe	Grade 10
Chanetsa	Sasha	Grade 10
Collett	Skye	Grade 10
Daniso	Mvisi	Grade 10
Gedezana	Sibulele	Grade 10
Hani	Lwam	Grade 10
Klaasen	Urshrudene	Grade 10
Letsoha	Bohlokwa	Grade 10
Lugogwana	Mwelase	Grade 10
Magadaza	Asakhe	Grade 10
Maposa	Bonga	Grade 10

Messiahs	Zenith	Grade 10
Mgedisi	Sinelethu	Grade 10
Mgengo	Onwaba	Grade 10
Moloto	Ona	Grade 10
Morrison	Ashlyn	Grade 10
Mpondo	Khanya	Grade 10
Mtywaru	Alihle	Grade 10
Mudau	Ranngu	Grade 10
Nyaniso	Alizwa	Grade 10
Pienaar	Kedibone	Grade 10
Rafu	Qhayiya	Grade 10
Rasimeni	Sigqibo	Grade 10
Sandan	Ishaam	Grade 10
Siziba	Talitha	Grade 10
Tait	Abbigaile	Grade 10
van As	Zoë	Grade 10
Vayise	Mayizukiswe	Grade 10
Wait	Isabella	Grade 10
Williams	Anesto	Grade 10
Adams	Jade	Grade 11
Barnardo	Inga	Grade 11
Beukes	Adri	Grade 11
Booyesen	Amber	Grade 11
Bristow	Roux-Anne	Grade 11
Broccardo	Olivia	Grade 11
Campher	Kacey	Grade 11
Campher	Kaleigh	Grade 11
Chapman	Alaska	Grade 11
Chininga	Mitchelle	Grade 11
Emery	André	Grade 11
Emery	John	Grade 11
Glibbery	Sophie	Grade 11
Gxamza	Libhongo	Grade 11
Hombana	Likhona	Grade 11
Johns	Rylan	Grade 11
Jubber	Larissa	Grade 11
Luck	Tamicka	Grade 11
Mbeleni	Thandiswa	Grade 11
Mlinganiso	Buchule	Grade 11
Ndwanya	Zenive	Grade 11
Neku	Sisipho	Grade 11

Perils	Courtney	Grade 11
Samente	Thulile	Grade 11
Saunders	Amy	Grade 11
Shaw	Siyaam	Grade 11
Shiyani	Emihle	Grade 11
Smith	Keenan	Grade 11
Soxa	Vuyo	Grade 11
Tenny	Lester	Grade 11
Toloane	Kerateloe	Grade 11
van Dyk	Daniel	Grade 11
Viljoen	Dané	Grade 11
Wilkinson	Rebecca	Grade 11
Williams	Ciarah	Grade 11
Athimoolam	Vaishivi	Grade 8
Baboo	Muhammad	Grade 8
Beling	Erin	Grade 8
Beling	Wade	Grade 8
Bower	Daniel	Grade 8
Cunningham	Nakisha	Grade 8
Heynes	Annabelle	Grade 8
Jamda	Linomtha	Grade 8
Koopman	Dayna	Grade 8
Welgemoed	Amelia	Grade 8
Ansley	Kyle	Grade 9
Aspeling	Lara	Grade 9
Blignaut	Keesha	Grade 9
Gqozo	Anathi	Grade 9
Gxoyiya	Esihle	Grade 9
Hoffman	Leehana	Grade 9
Li	Nina	Grade 9
Masango	Ayabulela	Grade 9
Ramsamy	Nerisha	Grade 9
Starbuck	Oliver	Grade 9