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Dear Alex Family Members

The first rains of Spring

There is something quite special about this time of year. Now that we have the sunshine earlier in the mornings, the addition of some rain today was such a blessing. It has been so long since we last had rain that I had quite forgotten what it feels like. I was not convinced by the weather in the first week of September that Spring had actually arrived. I am now convinced: plants are sprouting and the birds seem happy to be alive every morning. I hope that your week has been a good one. If you did not have the time to stop and smell a flower this week then please take a moment in the coming week to add the time.

As many of you saw on social media posts, we had a Grade 12 pupil go missing this week. As you can imagine, it was a terrifying time for the family and by extension our whole community. My thanks to everyone who showed concern and who supported the effort to locate him. He has been safely reunited with his family.

Thank you

To everyone who supported our 70th birthday celebration events. It was wonderful to have so many parents join us.

Test schedule

The last of our standardised tests takes place on Tuesday next week. I know this was a little disruptive for some. It is essential that we are able to conduct standardised testing across an entire grade at least once per term. Our timetable is very complex and does not always allow us this opportunity.

Lost and stolen phones and teenage brains

We regularly have phones lost on the campus. Some are taken, others are left. Our WiFi network allows us to track the devices, with reasonable accuracy, to particular locations and more often than not we are able to find the offending device. The task of tracking devices is made very much easier if the "Device Name" is changed from the default (normally the make and model of the phone) to the surname of the child. Instead of having to track a "Galaxy A35" when there are 50 on campus, the job is made much simpler if the devices are named.

Secondly, it is also simpler if the username and password of the Google account (for Android) or the iCloud account (for Apple) is known by the child. This is useful if the device has gone off campus. The "find my phone" type of software requires that the username and password are supplied in order to track the device. As you can imagine, time is of the essence in these cases.

While we all appreciate the benefits of having our children equipped with devices, as it helps us to know that they are safe, I am certain that many of us share the concern that our children may be exposed to dangers that we are not aware of when using their devices. I read this article this morning from the BBC News page:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crkjep23403o>

I have seen a lot of research circulating in educational circles about the negative impacts on teenagers of prolonged and unmonitored cell phone use. Several northern hemisphere countries have totally banned cell phones at schools.

While I am not advocating a ban, I do think that we are not careful enough about training our children to be conservative with screen time. I asked my class this week how many of them had phones that parents could freely access and how often checks by adults took place. None of them had their parents access their phones.

Privacy is important. The issue is that the social media platforms are designed to exploit all of us. They want us to get as much screen time as possible. Some adults have the self-control to manage the time spent scrolling, but adolescent brains are just not equipped. They are easier to exploit and more vulnerable to subtle influences.

I am advocating having open conversations with your families about screen time and placing rational limits on it. Many teens are not sleeping because they are compulsively checking devices in order not to miss anything. Prolonged sleep deficits are implicated in serious medical conditions.

If we come together as a community to seek the balance between the usefulness of children having devices and the hazards that come with them, we can get the best out of our devices and still protect our children when they most need it.



Big Bands Festival

The tickets for this event have already been sold out. We are looking forward to the event tomorrow evening and we wish our concert band all the very best

Wind Band and Friends

Further out, please keep 20 September open for our Wind Band Concert. Look forward to some delightful individual and ensemble performances.



Gaming Day

We are all looking forward to our first ever e-sports event, scheduled for the 27th. This is another opportunity for Alexans to show their skills. Join us if you have the opportunity, all are welcome.

Summer sport schedule

Please keep an eye out for the summer sports schedule. I have attached it with this newsletter. This will help you keep track of after school activities.

Please look after yourself and those you love this week.

Regards



Matthew Ridgway



A promotional poster for Alex Esports Gaming Day. The top section features a QR code and a photo of two football players. Below this, the Alex Esports logo is displayed alongside the event title 'GAMING DAY' in large yellow letters. The date '27 SEPTEMBER 2025' and location 'ALEX ROAD HIGH SCHOOL: THE HEART & COMPUTER LABS' are listed, along with the time '09:00 - 16:00' and a note about refreshments. The middle section promotes an 'EA SPORTS FC26' tournament, mentioning 'R50 Entry', 'PS5', and a limited number of slots, with a QR code for registration. It also mentions an association with 'E-KINGS'. The bottom section features 'LEAGUE OF LEGENDS' and encourages a LAN event, stating 'League of Legends LAN | and other various titles | You can also Bring your own PC for personal LAN Setups'. The bottom right corner states 'Open to ALL schools'. The poster includes several images of students playing games and a photo of a group of students.

PRESENTS
GAMING DAY
27 SEPTEMBER 2025
ALEX ROAD HIGH SCHOOL: THE HEART & COMPUTER LABS
09:00 - 16:00 | Refreshments on Sale

EA SPORTS **FC26**
Tournament | R50 Entry | PS5 |
SCAN QR CODE ABOVE TO REGISTER
LIMITED SLOTS

In Association with
E-KINGS

LEAGUE OF LEGENDS
League of Legends LAN | and other
various titles | You can also Bring your
own PC for personal LAN Setups

Open to **ALL** schools