

Daily Update Monday 23rd March 2020

On-line learning – I hope that this went well today. As I have said before, I am keen for us to keep the term going until Thursday, but equally, I do not want anyone to become stressed and anxious. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that many pupils have had a productive day and are engaging well with their teachers. It is important that we use this week to iron out any wrinkles. It is likely that we will increasingly be using Microsoft Teams next term. Many pupils are already communicating with their teachers via Teams (my daughter was looking at pictures of her English teacher's cats, asking questions about her work and communicating as a group with her classmates.....all at once!). A note on Teams – it is better to use the version that you download to your device if you can rather than the web browser version. We are also aware that there are not always as many devices as there are people in the household trying to work. Please do communicate with tutors and teachers so that consideration can be given where needed. We are going to discover many wonderful things whilst we are learning on-line and we must approach this time as an opportunity rather than a burden.

Exams - You will already be aware of the decision not to proceed with the summer examinations in England this summer, following the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Education on Wednesday 18 March. On Friday 20 March, the Secretary of State published a statement outlining the key aspects of the process, which will involve the use of teacher judgements. I wrote on Friday that we would be in touch with Year 11 and 13 parents today. We are not quite there, but we will send out a letter tomorrow morning with more detail and thoughts on where we stand at this stage.

Communication - I am aware that you, as parents, will have many questions on various items because of the recent Government measures towards schools. There were some very significant announcements during the course of last week, which we are processing. I will write to parents over the next couple of days to give you more information on our response to these extra-ordinary times. Meanwhile, I am very grateful for your patience, which is indicative of your support for the school and for me personally, whilst we consider the matters at hand carefully and properly.

Finally – I recorded an assembly today for the usual Senior School Tuesday morning assembly. We will make this available tomorrow morning. This is a part of what I said:

'It was a strange day on Friday as many of you left following the Government's requirement to close the school for nearly all our children. I admit to being in denial to some degree and so was keen to emphasise to Year 13 pupils that I was prepared to say 'au revoir' and not goodbye. It remains our fervent hope that we will be able to return to school soon. Schools are odd places without children in them. They are empty, silent, cold. I admit to having a walk around the school on the weekend and to sitting on the ha-ha and shedding a tear of mourning at the emptiness. Stonar has quickly become my home, my purpose, my school and I can't wait for you all to return to once again fill its hall, fields and classrooms with noise and laughter.

The school motto used to be 'Sincerity, Honour, Service'. I rather like it. It somewhat connects with what I often talk about in assemblies. Come on recite with me.....'Work hard, Be kind, Get involved.' We are now facing challenges that will require 'service' from all of us. For some, this is clear. As I speak, my wife is doing a shift in Intensive Care in Bath. However, for most of us this will not translate into chest-beating courage, but the quiet service to do the right thing day in day out. To follow the guidance of Government and those who are advising them, to look after each other, particularly those in our household, and to understand that these quiet acts of selflessness will make a difference to the whole. In this, I would like to thank the staff who are looking after the children of key workers in our school today and going forward. Their service to the national effort is deeply appreciated by those parents and me.'

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