

19 March 2020

Update – 19/3/2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you once again for your ongoing support at this difficult time. We are all planning and reacting in equal measure to the latest information or instruction from the government. At the College we remain steadfastly committed to providing the best possible education (academically and pastorally) in these ever-changing circumstances. We are relieved that our preparations for remote learning have been in place for a while and that we have been able to test them already (thank you Year 12). We are confident that the children will continue to learn next week. There will doubtless be some teething problems with the technology and its use, and we will invite feedback from you, your children, and staff before the end of next week so that we can review it and seek any improvements ahead of what seems likely to be ongoing remote learning next term.

Today was a difficult day in school for pupils and staff alike, and especially those in Years 11 and 13, for whom the government's announcement about cancelled public examinations has had the largest impact. We cherish our community and all those in it, so as much as today was distressing, it was also a demonstration of compassion, confidence and resolve.

The announcements from government have focused our attention into two new areas – provision for the children of keyworkers and those with particular need, and the outcomes and provision for GCSE and A Level students, for whom public examinations will no longer happen in May and June.

Children of Keyworkers and those with particular need

The government has mandated that schools continue to be open in some way for children in these categories, whilst being closed to others. We are, of course, keen and committed to making this provision happen in the interests of the children and families concerned, the community, and the country. The categories this applies to will be defined by the government imminently. In order to plan our provision, we first need to establish how many children from our community fall into these categories. To that end, we will ask that you complete a survey link from tomorrow when we know what the specific categories are, indicating firstly whether your child or children fit into this category, and secondly your preference for the amount of time they should be in school.

Public Examinations

The government has also stated that this summer's GCSE and A Level examinations will not happen. We have immense sympathy with the children this affects, and not just in academic terms. The human impact of not being able to show the fruits of their efforts and have them recognised in the same way as with their older and younger peers will be hard to take. Today

was just the first day of helping them with this realisation and reality. As yet, the alternative means by which children will be allocated grades, and when, remains unclear. Our short-term advice to the children is to keep studying because that routine is valuable, because they should complete work in process for its own sake and not just for a qualification, and because it remains possible that they will be assessed on what they have studied in some way at a later date. As soon as we have more details of how the nation plans to move forwards in this area, we will share them with you and your children. In the meantime, please be assured that we continue to support you and them in every way we can.

Pastoral and Mental Health Support

We are currently reviewing the pastoral support we can provide remotely to ensure that children are not just engaged intellectually but also have the emotional support they are used to receiving from school. Tutors are already prepared to check in with children over the course of next week and we are in discussions with our counselling service, Bromley Y, to ascertain the nature of their remote offer for those pupils already receiving counselling through the school. We will circulate a fuller update imminently, both to parents and to pupils, but in the meantime I would like to remind all parents that, as a Lewisham school, we have access to Kooth online counselling which offers young people (aged 10+) the opportunity to have a text-based conversation with a qualified counsellor. Counsellors are available from 1200-2200 on weekdays and 1800-2200 at weekends. Registration is free at kooth.com. Childline.org.uk also has some good calming and mindfulness activities for younger children.

Pupil Acceptable Use Agreement

For pupils to be able to access interactive learning from Monday onwards, you will need to have completed the SurveyMonkey consent forms. I hope that all parents have now had the chance to discuss its parameters with their children. If you have not already done so, please check your email account and fill in the appropriate survey for Junior School or for Senior School.

Before I close, I also wanted to thank the pupils and staff involved in Legally Blonde, our 2020 Musical, that was still able to run on Wednesday for pupils and staff. A DVD copy will be available shortly. Amidst all else, it was a timely reminder that there is more to education than examinations, of the need to still find joy around us in even the most challenging times, and in children's enduring capacity to deliver that to us.

Yours sincerely



Mr N P Hewlett
Headmaster