

27 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you at the end of this Lent Term as is the current practice. However, this year there are extraordinary circumstances that we find ourselves in, both as a country and as a College.

I would firstly like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone at St Dunstan's for the exceptional effort that has been made in recent weeks to support our community in the face of a national crisis.

I have been kept regularly apprised by the leadership team of all that has been done to prepare our response to the necessity for virtual learning, and to sustain these arrangements over the last few days. What has struck me throughout is the compassion, flexibility and determination shown by a community that is managing the complexities of this challenge in an exemplary manner. The College Leadership Team will consider carefully the outcome of this last week and seek to implement improvements and enhancements to our students' learning experience for the duration of the current situation.

I know the staff at St Dunstan's have been incredibly grateful for the innumerable messages of support and gratitude from so many of you, and a number of which have been shared with me. Thank you so much for your support.

I want to offer you some peace of mind over our financial position and our strategy, as well as some necessary decisions that have been made. A large majority of the College's overheads are fixed and a significant proportion of these are for staffing. We are committed to maintaining the high calibre of staff we have working across the Foundation and to avoid redundancies as far as is financially possible. We want all of our excellent staff, both teaching and support, to continue to deliver your child's virtual lessons and be ready to resume 'business as usual' when we all return after this period of College closure. In order to achieve this we need to ensure that our cash-flow is maintained and fee obligations are met. We will do this while being mindful of the very great financial pressures that we know some families are enduring as a consequence of this crisis.

It is with this in mind that the governing body has taken the following decisions until such time as the crisis has been resolved. We will:

1. Offer maximum flexibility to families in financial need as a consequence of the virus, by considering payment holidays and repayment plans for current fees. Please liaise with the Bursar if you fall within this category.
2. Delay the planned 4.5% annual increase of fees which was agreed at a recent governing body meeting in order to offer some financial security to parents. Please note that this increase was, largely, necessary to support the 43% increase in the College's contribution to Teachers' Pension Scheme. This means that the fees for the Michaelmas term will not increase as planned and will be the same as currently.
3. Delay the decision to implement a 2% annual increase in staff salaries
4. Seek, wherever possible, to reclaim costs from our routine operations and to pass these cost-savings back to you within the delay in the fee increase above. This will include savings from food supplies, energy consumption, curriculum resources and other running costs.
5. Explore all opportunities for Government Funding, such as Furlough, and other rebates, so that we can also pass these back to you within the future fee levels.

These steps have been taken to ensure the ongoing financial health of the organisation throughout this challenging time and to support our community. They are not permanent but temporary, and will be reviewed as soon as the national picture becomes clearer. The Bursar will be reviewing these constantly and we will revise our position as soon as we are in a position to budget with greater certainty for the future.

The governing body remains committed to our plan for facility development. When this crisis passes, it will be even more important that we are able to provide your children with the outstanding facilities that we have planned. It is with this in mind that the governing body remains committed to delivering our new Junior School and STEM Block buildings and I would like to remind you and reassure you, that this development is not being funded by existing parents' fees.

Thank you again for all your support throughout this unprecedented time and period of great challenge for the country and for the school. I do hope that your Easter is an enjoyable one, in whatever form it takes, and let us all hope that we can come through this chapter with renewed determination to take St Dunstan's forward, and from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely



Paul Durgan
Chairman