

15 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I write to you at the end of another week and before we enter the last week of this half-term; lockdown seems to make the weeks fly by!

We continue to be kept on our toes by government announcements, the guidance from which seemingly changes by the day, and sometimes by the hour! You will be aware that we have been asked to facilitate the return to College of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from 1 June. This is something we are keen to support, for the wellbeing of the children, as much as anything else. It will also provide us with important intelligence for how we might be able to 'scale-up' a more comprehensive return of pupils in the future, and in a way that is safe and productive for our whole community. Miss Whitwood has already written to those Junior School families affected by this return and will send more logistical information next week before the Exeat.

The news this week of gradual return, triggered the first meeting of our 'Reopening of College Working Party', drawing together all relevant staff from across the teaching and support staff teams. You will appreciate that there is significant logistical complexity in facilitating the safe return of any pupils to the College site and not least in the face of shifting government guidance. Whilst it was a particularly long and complex meeting, I was extremely relieved to hear just how much thought had already been given to ensuring the safest possible environment for your children, from how we clean and separate toys, to how we sustain pupil 'bubbles', mark out social distancing in the Refectory, create isolation rooms and a whole host of other steps that will now be enacted before 1 June, when these first children will be allowed back onto the site. I want to give you absolute reassurance that the safety of our pupils and staff is of the utmost priority.

It is partly with this priority and complexity in mind that we do not envisage any Senior School pupils returning to the College earlier than 15 June, and it is now almost certain that no Lower School pupils (Years 7 – 9) will have any return to the College before the summer. In the Senior School, the government is understandably targeting Year 10 and 12 for some sort of modified access to on-site education before the summer. As we know, in the vast majority of schools, remote learning has been very remote indeed (or even non-existent), and for these examination year groups, therefore, the government is understandably concerned. This categorically does not apply to St Dunstan's, and our remote learning is going well and our pupils have regular contact with their teachers. We do not want to now offer a substandard education to Year 10 and 12 by promising something that we cannot deliver safely or effectively, nor do we want to do so at the cost of the quality education our teachers are currently providing to them remotely and concurrently to the lower school pupils who will need to be in receipt of it until the end of term. This being said, we understand the value of both trialling a phased return to College for Senior School pupils before the summer, and also the benefits that would likely be reaped by these pupils by way of human interaction,

pastoral contact, catch-up work, Higher Education preparation and various other, smaller-scale, functions that could be accommodated in small groups and with select teaching staff. It is in this vein that we are now planning for a programme of small-group return at some point towards the latter stages of the next half-term. More details will be circulated on that in due course.

For the Lower School comes the message that they will almost certainly not return to College before the summer and I know for many that will be devastating news. All I can say to these pupils is that we will continue to give you the very best of ourselves, maintaining teaching and learning, pastoral support and the enrichment programme to the very best of our ability. I quite understand the toll that this will be taking on pupils and on parents but we have no choice but to remain strong. Mrs Davies' letter this week, detailing our remote pastoral support, is therefore timely. You can find this [HERE](#).

With the approach of the second half of Trinity Term comes a number of other considerations. We are acutely aware of the workload pressure currently being faced, in particular, by Lower School pupils. We are also aware that the enrichment programme of Adventure Week and Festival Week will no longer be in place. It is with this in mind that Mr Johnson's letter, which can be found [HERE](#), details a comprehensive plan for how we adjust the Lower School curriculum, to make it more manageable and less intense, in the second half of this term. In that same letter, Mr Johnson outlines our planned changes to internal examinations and assessments for the Senior School.

It is not currently our intention to extend the summer term dates. Our staff have arguably been working harder than ever to sustain the education you have been receiving and they need a rest. It may be necessary to enact examinations towards the end of the summer holiday for Year 10 and 12, in order to avoid any further disruption to teaching from September, but this is all covered in Mr Johnson's letter.

There is a lot to take in and the landscape is changing all the time. As such we are having to respond quickly and sometimes go in unplanned directions. This is all to be understood but we can appreciate that this will be unsettling for many. Whilst you tell me you have found our communication to be strong, I intend to offer the opportunity for a series of virtual Q and As to take place next week through Microsoft Teams. I will likely divide these into specific areas of interest and more details will follow very early next week. I want you to have as much information as possible before the Exeat break.

In other news, it is wonderful to see our building going up at a ferocious pace. It is now very much 'out of the ground' and I hope you have been able to follow progress through our website and other social media channels.

As you know, I like to conclude with some highlights from the week!

In the Junior School, Pre-Prep embarked on a Treasure Island adventure in drama, creating pirate adventures in their living rooms, as well as sending in videos where they have been explaining life processes – from cats, dogs and frogs to little brothers! Nursery have been cooking lots of healthy food having been inspired by 'The Enormous Turnip'. Prep pupils have enjoyed pointillism in art, voting on their favourite jokes and in Upper KS2, pupils have been growing their own stalactites and stalagmites. They have also been exploring sustainable

energy sources in-keeping with the Theme of the Week and some pupils have even attempted to make their own solar powered pizza ovens!

Mr Gower reports from the Senior School that on Thursday, nearly 100 pupils from across the age groups seized the opportunity to participate in our first, remote sporting fixture of the lockdown period. Pupils were invited to submit GPS files for a 1500m virtual race against other Trinity Group Schools. We are hoping to offer far more opportunities like this so keep your eye on our sporting, social media channels. He would also like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the musical opportunities that students have, such as the Virtual Choir and SDC Sounds. We are really keen to share the musical exploits of our pupils with the wider College community, so do visit the music department pages and join the many others who are getting involved.

Next Friday would ordinarily be Commemoration Day, held in the grandeur of Southwark Cathedral. In the circumstances, we will now treat this as a normal school day. However, I am hopeful that you might have a video treat to go into the Exeat break – virtual Commem, who would have thought it!

I do hope you have an enjoyable weekend, can find the time to enjoy the sunshine, and I look forward to being in touch again next week.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N P Hewlett', written in a cursive style.

Mr N P Hewlett
Headmaster