

Coronavirus update – 22/05/2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Happy Commemoration Day! It felt very odd not to be travelling to London Bridge this morning and awaiting the great crocodile of St Dunstan's pupils making their way to the Cathedral. I am most grateful to Mr Squibb, Revd Boswell and various pupils from across the College for producing a virtual Commemoration Service that we can enjoy from our homes. Everyone has had to pull this together at great speed and amongst a number of competing priorities; thank you and I hope you enjoy it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VXgm-grS-w>

As you will learn from my introduction to the service, it is now a matter of tradition that Commemoration Day marks the end of the first half of Trinity Term and the beginning of the May Exeat (it having moved from St Dunstan's Day, which falls a few days or weeks earlier). And so, this letter firstly thanks you and your children for all you have done to support us across these last 5 weeks, as we have sought to offer a consistently high-quality remote education.

I am well aware that after another 5 weeks of lockdown, and after the inevitable disappointment that there is no imminent return to the College for the majority of senior pupils before the summer, patience wears thin. People are inevitably strained and frustrated; pupils, parents and staff. It is not easy to maintain momentum in a virtual world with all the individual challenges that come with the broader picture. What is needed now is a few days of rest – rest from screens, Teams and Firefly – and the opportunity to make the most of the peace of lockdown and the space to take stock. We will return to our final few weeks of school with renewed rigour and purpose, and all aim to end the academic year on a high, in whatever ways are possible to us.

I hope the parent question and answer sessions this week have proved helpful to consolidate your understanding of our plans and current operations. I certainly very much enjoyed talking to a number of you this morning and was most grateful for the spirit of support, gratitude and understanding.

Those affected by return, and most especially Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 6, who we are very much looking forward to welcoming back on 1 June, will be well aware of the extraordinary lengths we have gone to in our attempt to make the site as safe as is practicable. Over the course of the first two weeks of next half-term we will gain an invaluable insight into the realities of social distancing in a school setting and it will help us forge a plan for the return, in some form, of Years 10 and 12 from 15 June. As you will be aware, at the moment, it is our intention to facilitate this in small groups, helping those year groups access academic and pastoral support, rather than entire lessons, which are being well provided for through the remote learning platforms. We also intend to facilitate end of year

examinations for Year 12 at this time, if they would prefer to sit them in advance of the summer.

There has been a great deal of communication from various quarters about examinations, reports and grades, particularly in the Senior School, as well as clarity over our adjusted curriculum structure for next half-term, given the absence of the routine enrichment activities. Do make sure that you have read these letters, which are held both on the website and the parent portal, as they contain important procedural detail.

You will be pleased to hear that we now have nearly all our staffing in place for the next academic year. We were fortunate to have very few staff leaving us this year and so the task was far more straightforward than might otherwise have been the case. A full list of *salvete!* and *valete!* will be sent to you at the end of term. In the short-term, today marks Mrs McLellan's last day with us for the time being, as she takes maternity leave, and we wish her and her family very well as they prepare for their new arrival. Mrs Davies will cover Mrs McLellan as Deputy Head Pastoral and DSL; Miss Karmock-Golds will cover Mrs Davies as Head of Lower School; Mr Armstrong will cover Miss Karmock-Golds as Head of Year 9.

As I look back over the half term, there are so many highlights to draw upon. However, there is no doubt that the remote 'Show and Tell' galleries have been a huge highlight in the Junior School; from a 'Home Learning from Families' blog, to a new-found KS1 love of making very impressive stop-start Lego animation movies, to KS2 Bake Offs, Maori art, play writing, videos of new pets and play writing in KS2. The lovely comments and compliments that the children have written on each other's posts are incredibly thoughtful and kind; we have proudly recreated the compassion and warmth of the classroom throughout these pages, and it has brought smiles to all our faces during lockdown.

In the Senior School, thanks go to all those pupils who have engaged so wholeheartedly with the virtual Forder Programme. To pick one highlight, the quality of the 'Phoenix Project' submissions have been simply exceptional. I very much hope that we will be able to share these with the broader community in the near future.

I am aware that for some Year 10 and 12 pupils there will be a need for some revision over this Exeat, but, as I have already said, I do think it is important for the whole community that the next few days are seen as an opportunity for genuine rest and relaxation. Remote learning might be different, but that is not to say it is any less intense for us all. Have a lovely Exeat and I look forward to being in touch again upon our return.

Yours sincerely



Mr N P Hewlett
Headmaster