

22 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Lower School Trinity Term Exeat

I would like to use this opportunity to say well done to our Lower School students for the resilience they have shown over the past five weeks of the Trinity Term, whilst we have been in remote learning. I am incredibly proud of the way they have adapted to this most challenging situation and continued to engage with all aspects of school life in a remote setting. The Lower School form tutors really look forward to interacting with the students each morning during tutor time and I know that they miss seeing them in person. It is most understandable that some students may be finding it difficult to come to terms with the fact that they will not be able to return to the school site this academic year and that we will not be able to enjoy all of the wonderful activities that normally mark the end of the school year at St Dunstan's College. I have no doubt that they are missing the day to day social interaction and would like to remind all families that we continue to be here to support students who are finding the situation challenging. Please contact us if you have any concerns about your child or encourage your child to reach out to a member of staff.

Trinity Term Assessments and Attainment

You will have seen from Mr Johnson's letter last week that students in Years 7 to 9 will not sit formal examinations this summer. We firmly believe that this is the right decision to support the wellbeing of the students and gives them an important opportunity to take time out to rest this exeat. They may be asked to complete more light-touch, open book assessments in some subjects after exeat. However, I would like to emphasise that we expect students to take a break from school work during this exeat. Students will be given a 'working grade' in their end of term report which will reflect current potential in each subject, based on performance across the academic year.

Trinity Term Curriculum

You may have also noted from Mr Johnson's letter that the second half of the Trinity Term will be divided in to two parts. The first three weeks after the exeat will follow the same remote learning timetable and structure as the first half of this term. Lessons for students in Years 7 to 9 will focus on completing courses and consolidation, plus any informal assessments as necessary. During this time Year 9 will only continue with the subjects that they will be taking for GCSE and will therefore only be required to attend interactive lessons and complete work in these subjects. Subject teachers will be giving guidance for consolidation and enrichment activities that students can complete in the non-contact time that has been released as a result, to support preparation for the start of the GCSE courses in September. For the final fortnight of the term, students in the Lower School will be able to select from a range of extended projects, the aim of which is to offer the opportunity to engage in wider, cross-curricular learning and enrich and extend their knowledge beyond the normal curriculum. We hope that this will allow the students the chance to feel a real sense of achievement, individuality in their learning and build towards an exciting goal at the end of the academic year.

Trinity Term – ‘Screen-Free Exeat’

The cancellation of Lower School examinations for this year means that we do not expect students to complete revision over the exeat. It is with this in mind that the Lower School team is promoting and encouraging a ‘Screen-Free Exeat’. We are encouraging students to take time away from screens and school work and undertake activities that focus on wellbeing. We have created a set of Firefly pages with book and recipe recommendations, ideas for board games and a huge variety of other activities that students can take part in. We have also included some tips on organisation, should students need to re-set and re-organise their notes following a half term of remote learning. Students have been sent a task with a link to these pages, so that they can access them easily during the exeat and we would love to hear about any of the activities that the students get up to, so that we can celebrate and reward when we return in June. Students have also been invited to take part in the Lower School Video Competition, which asks students to create a short video clip that explains what they like most about different aspects of school life. Students have been set a task on Firefly with more information and we look forward to seeing their videos after exeat. All of these activities and projects are completely voluntary and there is no expectation that students take part, although we would be delighted if they decide to.

Trinity Term Pastoral Care

We are conscious that such a prolonged period of time away from friends, family and normal routine may be taking its toll on the students and the uncertainty of when and how life will change over the coming months will undoubtedly be a source of anxiety. The pastoral support that I detailed in my letter last week will continue through the rest of this term and the Lower School pastoral team are already discussing strategies to further enhance the pastoral care and support during remote learning. You may be aware that Mrs McLellan, Deputy Head Pastoral will be leaving this exeat on parental leave and as a result I will be taking on this role in her absence. I am sure that you will join me in thanking her for all she has done to support the wellbeing of students in the Lower School this year and wishing her well as she welcomes a new addition to the family. I am delighted that Miss Karmock-Golds will be taking on the role of Head of Lower School during this time and Mr Armstrong will be Head of Year 9, supporting that year group as they move in to the Middle School. I know that they will do a fantastic job at supporting the students to thrive, especially at this most uncertain time.

In the Action for Happiness Meaningful May calendar that we have shared with students this term, it recommends for today that we ask a loved one what matters to them most and why. I hope that over the weekend you are able to share these thoughts and with your family and friends. I would like to wish all of the Lower School students and their families an enjoyable bank holiday weekend. I hope that you will be able to enjoy some of the nice weather, whilst following social distancing rules! I hope that the students take time over exeat to step away from screens and school work and enjoy time with friends and family, either remotely or in person.

Yours sincerely



Mrs G Davies
Head of Lower School