

Dear Parents,

I hope that your children have enjoyed their first full week back of this Spring Term. I have been delighted to receive positive reports throughout the week from members of staff about how well students have adapted back to this remote style of teaching and learning. There have been some fine examples of creative delivery of remote lessons throughout the school, and it is always wonderful to see whole classes communicating and engaging with each other during form time, albeit virtually.

Cocurricular and community activities

As was the case during last year's lockdown, we are very keen to keep the RGS Community as united as possible, so we will be launching some school-wide initiatives over the coming weeks. I would like to encourage both parents and students to get involved in these as much as possible. They can be a great way to stay connected with the school and contemporaries, while having fun at the same time. The first of these initiatives is a **Parent playlist challenge**, the details of which can be found [here](#). This week's **Wilde's Weekly Wisdom (KenKen Challenge 2)** can be found [here](#). Well done to those of you who made it on the Hall of Fame for last week's challenge. In addition, the Sports department are setting up a series of weekly house competitions, the first of which for this weekend is a running challenge and details have been put on the student hub. It has also been good to note how many students have been attending the after-school fitness sessions that are being coordinated online for each sport.

Musical ensembles for each year group continue to meet via Teams, working towards recording a spring concert in March, and it has been good to see how many have already attended the first rehearsals of term. I would encourage anyone else wishing to be involved to contact either Mr Fazlic or Ms Bolt. The Jazz Concert, that was scheduled for Friday 5th February, has been postponed but we hope to provide students with further performance opportunities and will communicate about this in due course. Meanwhile, Visiting Music Teachers are continuing to provide individual lessons and ABRSM exams are still booked for March in the hope that they are allowed to go ahead at that point.

Testing in school and informing us of Covid cases out of school

Those of you who follow our social media channels, may have seen that this week we started rolling out our mass testing of staff and students who are still attending school. The testing currently takes place in the Main Hall – the first time since 1906 it has been used in such a way. I am pleased to report it has gone smoothly and would once again like to thank those who have volunteered to help with this process for when we need to roll this out to all students.

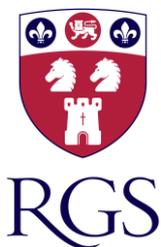
I would also like to remind you of the importance of letting us know – even those students learning remotely - about any positive cases in your household, as we are obliged to make the Department for Education aware of transmission rates among students.

Adjustment to Senior School timetable

You may have heard from your children that we have taken the decision to make a slight change to the structure of the Senior School timetable, primarily to allow students and staff a little more time for lunch and more opportunity for exercise outdoors in daylight. The change involves moving Form/Time Assembly to 8.45am and adjusting the start of Period 1. This does not reduce the amount of teaching time, it simply reorders the day:

0845 - 0905 Form Time/ Assembly

Royal Grammar School, Eskdale Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4DX
T: 0191 281 3940 E: communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



0910 - 1005 P1
1005 - 1020 Break
1020 - 1115 P2 (no change)
1120 - 1215 P3 (no change)
1215 - 1325 Lunch
1330 - 1425 P4 (no change)
1430 - 1525 P5 (no change)

Also, relating to the timetable, I do need to remind parents that there may be times when classes cannot be taught by their normal teacher. In this circumstance a different teacher will take responsibility for the group. This is not anything to worry about and is not anything different to normal school practice – it just may be more visible at home in this period of remote learning.

Wellbeing and e-safety

Monitoring your child's wellbeing is a key priority for us. Each day your child should be registering with their Form Supervisor who will check how they are getting on. It is imperative the students log in on time to check in with their Form Supervisor at 8.45am (disappointingly for some, this includes Sixth Formers who have a study period 1, please!). This week we are also sending out wellbeing surveys to all students in Y7 to Y13 to help us identify concerns and encourage students to reflect on how they feel they are doing.

Spending more time on devices, and often more time unsupervised whilst others in their household work, can mean that students are at greater risk online. Whilst the students have had plenty of lessons on e-safety and are well-informed, it can leave parents in their "IT-shadow" so if you need any advice and support with any e-safety issues for young people then we would urge you to use your [Parent Zone membership](#) and have a look at the Parent Lounge resources there. A quick link to a useful Parent Zone post about lockdown advice and resources is located [here](#).

Public Exams

Mr Loxley has communicated separately with parents in Y11 and Y13 but all parents might be interested in an overview of the public exam situation. In summary, OFQUAL has now outlined the extent of their intended consultation, which will inform their approach to awarding grades. These include: proposals to create mini-exams that will be conducted in schools and marked by exam boards; how teachers will be required to assess and judge student grades; and how students will be able to appeal grades.

Broadly we are in favour of externally assessed exams for which we have been preparing students but we also know our students well and have faith in the ability of our teachers to reach a fair judgement of each individual's grades. In the meantime, we have had a further update from Cambridge International Exams reinforcing their intention to continue with exams in June for IGCSE and we will monitor any development around IGCSEs closely.

We hope to have more information about the OFQUAL consultation and its outcome before half term. In advance of this, students should be prepared for both mini exams and teacher assessed grades. In either case, the message is clear: keep focussed and keep providing teachers with evidence of good work.

And finally

Following from Dr Bell's message of hope in this week's assembly, which can be found [here](#), I hope that all RGS families continue to stay safe and are able to enjoy a restful weekend.

Best wishes,

Geoffrey Stanford
Headmaster

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