



Dear Parents,

It has been an absolute pleasure having students back in school over the last week and a half and I hope your children have enjoyed being able to see their contemporaries and engage with their teachers in person again.

Student Wellbeing

As far as possible we have tried to ensure that the returning to school should be a positive experience but we appreciate that for some have found it difficult. If you do have any concerns at any stage, please do reach out to our pastoral team of form supervisors and Heads of Year.

Meanwhile, this week our Y12s had the second of their anxiety workshops, which has been well received, followed that evening by workshop via Zoom for the Y12 parents. The copy of the recording will be being shared with the rest of the Y12 parents once we have received it.

We are planning on offering a similar opportunity for the Y13 students next Wednesday, focusing on the topic of *Stress and Distress* with the aim of providing strategies to cope with these challenges to their mental health.

I have also been asked to share with our parents a recommendation for the documentary presently on [BBC iPlayer called Our Silent Emergency led by Roman Kemp](#). This looks at the mental health crisis in young people and please be warned that it is very powerful viewing so not easy to watch but it is a topic which is extremely important.

Lateral Flow Testing

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who was involved in the in-school Lateral Flow Testing which saw over 3,000 tests conducted. To all parents who completed consent forms, and especially those who joined the small army of volunteers on site, your support has been paramount in getting all the children back into school so swiftly.

Perhaps inevitably, I am sorry to report that in the very last period of testing in school (for the third and final time) we identified one positive, yet asymptomatic, case of Covid-19. As such, this Y8 student and a small group of peers are now isolating and therefore accessing their learning remotely. While case numbers have been falling, we recognise that instances will still occasionally be confirmed within school. However, your children can help us reduce the numbers that need to isolate by following our social distancing guidelines. I do understand that the children are so happy to be reunited but their help in minimising contact is for the benefit of our whole community and I am optimistically looking forward to a time when this repeated message is no longer necessary.

As of now, students are now no longer required to have tests in school and Senior School parents have already received more information about the at-home testing kits. These tests continue to be optional but I encourage all to continue with them. Given

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our continuing responsibility to organise test and trace, I also politely ask parents to record test results [here](#). For your convenience the link also appears in the 'parents' and 'students' pages of our website.

Exams

Our Y13 students came back to a week of internal exams last week. We appreciate that, even in any normal year, this would have been a stressful time for some and this has been particularly true in the current climate given the continuing uncertainty surrounding grading this year. We are doing all we can to support our students and I hope that students and parents trust us when we say that these exams were not their final A-Level so that if performances were not as hoped for there is time ahead to rectify that. Feedback that students will get from the experience will be invaluable in fine-tuning any remaining evidence we will need to justify grade recommendations next term. Whilst we still await detailed guidance from exam boards, there is no doubt that schools will be expected to justify with an evidence base the decisions surrounding their judgements and we will talk about this at the forthcoming parents conferences. In the meantime, I hope that my earlier communication on our process of awarding grades was helpful and I should note that I have been pleased to hear how students have approached internal exams with a high level of maturity and determination to demonstrate the fruits of their hard work over the last few months. I have had a number of encouraging conversations with Y13 students myself in the last few days and I am sure that Y11 students are approaching their exams this week with the same impressive attitude.

Spring Recital and Concert

I hope that those who were able to watch our annual Spring Recital enjoyed the event. Thank you to Mr Fazlic, the Music Department and all the students involved for providing us with such a wonderful series of performances. If you did not get a chance to watch it at the time, you can view it [here](#).

The Spring Concert takes place on Wednesday 31st March from 7pm, and will be a wonderful opportunity to relax and reflect ahead of our Easter holidays. The link for the Spring Concert is [here](#).

Saturday Sport and the Easter sports programme

Last weekend saw the return of the Sports Department's Saturday Sport Programme. This three-week slot offers an opportunity for Y7-Y10 students to participate in school sport again, to have a chance to experience internal competition and above all to have fun. If you have not already signed up for this, I would encourage you to do so, all of the details are in Mr Chadwick's email of the 9th of March, titled 'Saturday Sport Programme'.

Separately, there will be more information and a booking form for the Easter holiday sports club sent out shortly.

Sarah Everard

I am so proud of our community's social conscience, and I have already been contacted by staff, students and Old Novos who are as shocked as we all are, of the death of



Sarah Everard and I am keen to know that the school will champion thoughtful discussion on the issues. I have briefly spoken about this in the Senior School assembly yesterday and we plan to explore some of the themes around gender equality and respect for one another in activities relevant to each year group while also continuing to work on race equality and inclusion more generally.

Comic Relief

On a happier note, we will be celebrating Comic Relief in the Senior School tomorrow. I appreciate that this is short notice for parents but I hope that pupils are aware. It will be a (sensible!) non uniform day and, I am sorry to say, that students should not wear red noses to ensure no inadvertent swapping!

We would be grateful if students could contribute £2 each for the non-uniform day and, while I would much rather students personally experienced the act of giving, this time we politely ask that parents give via ParentPay, to avoid the handling of cash. The link for you to make your gift is [here](#).

We are also encouraging students to carry out fundraising activities, independently, at home this week and next; there are lots of suggestions [here](#). Similarly, any fundraised income can be paid through ParentPay which we will then consolidate and transfer to Comic Relief.

In the meantime, I wish you all a good week and I look forward to being in touch again soon.

With best wishes

Geoffrey Stanford

Headmaster