



Dear Parents,

I hope that this letter finds you well as we approach the end of an extraordinary Spring Term, full of challenges but also many highlights. Our social media channels give a sense of the breadth of activity happening and, yet again, our young people have impressed us with their resilience and willingness to get straight back into school life. Don't forget that tonight is the Senior Spring Concert, here is the [link to attend](#).

I have a number of updates to share about the end of Term, Easter arrangements and plans for the Summer Term. I hope you will forgive the amount of operational detail I need to share. Again, most of these are relevant to Senior School parents but I am also sending this to Junior School families for information.

### **Confirmed case of Covid-19 in Y7 and plans for ongoing Lateral Flow testing**

Unfortunately, on Tuesday, we received notification of another confirmed case of Covid-19 in Y7. We have already been in touch with the parents of students who have been identified as being in close contact and they are now self-isolating. As ever, I do want to reassure you that the measures we have in school are in place to help to keep us as safe as possible and I would encourage all to remain vigilant.

Meanwhile, thank you for your continued support with the Lateral Flow Testing. Each student has been issued with enough tests to ensure that this can be continued over the Easter break and we continue to encourage the practice of testing twice a week with results still being reported both to NHS Track & Trace and also via the [student link](#) on the school website.

We have been asked to advise that, should you have an issue such as damaged, missing or difficult to use items in the kit, or you are unable to log your results, you should call 119. If an incident leads to, or has potential for, harm (for example, swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit), as well as seeking support from the helpline above, you should report this on the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) yellow card reporting site](#).

In preparation for your child returning to school on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April, a test must be carried out either the night before, or morning of, the first day back to find and isolate any positive cases.

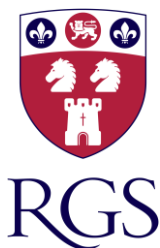
### **End of term arrangements**

The Junior School Spring Term ends after school on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. For all Senior School students, the Spring Term will end at 12pm on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April, at which time there will be a staggered departure. These times and locations are as below:

- 12pm – Y8 depart via Main Reception; Y11 via Church Gate; Y9 via Classics / SF Corridor.
- 12.10pm – L6th depart via Main Reception; Y10 via Church Gate; Y7 depart via Classics / SF Corridor.

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- 12.15pm – U6th depart via Church Gate or Main Reception

We are only able to offer a short period of supervised care after the final departure time, so I would kindly ask that all students are collected as soon as possible that day with late departures via the Main Reception or Church Gate. The Main Reception will remain open until 4pm, but no external access to the site will be available after 3pm.

### **Easter holiday guidance for parents**

I understand that some parents may need to use external childcare providers or out of school extra-curricular activities for their children over the Easter break. If this is the case for you and your family, we have been asked to encourage that you limit the use of multiple out-of-school-settings providers, and only use one out-of-school-setting in addition to school as far as possible. All providers you are considering using should have their own protective measures in place and further guidance on this and other important information regarding children attending out-of-school settings can be found [here](#).

I would also like to highlight that the DfE have updated their guidance on '[what parents need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#)'.

### **Plans for the Summer Term**

We are very aware that students (and indeed parents and staff) have had a very difficult start to the year. This has been particularly hard for many of our younger students who have been trying to manage online learning in a lot of subjects along with coping with lessons in bubbles. I was struck, last week, by a comment from a Year 7 form when asked to go to the Studio Theatre who said that they did not know where it was. Such has been life in bubbles that our younger students have not even managed to become familiar with our buildings! We do not feel, this year, that we should put Year 7 or 8 students through the pressure of internal exams. Instead, in order to give them experience of life beyond their bubbles and in lieu of Year 7 camp this year and last summer, we are planning to run a series of off-site outdoors activity days. These will be in the final week of the first half of term for Year 7 and in the second week of the second half of term for Year 8.

We are also aware that this pressure will have been felt by Years 9 and 10 and are keen that they should be able to take time off over the Easter break. To allow them to do this we propose to move internal exams for these two year-groups back into the second week of the second half of term in June. The intention is not to create a longer revision period but, quite the opposite, so students should not feel under pressure to revise over this coming holiday. However, Lower Sixth students will still need to do their internal exams at the end of May as this will allow them time in the second half of term to reflect on the outcome of these exams as they look forward to preparing their university applications.

We are also developing our plans for the later part of June when we intend to put on a programme of sports days and prize events for each year group in order to celebrate all that has been achieved this year. We will still have the Parents' Conferences for Years 7, 10 and Lower Sixth in June, but might need to adjust the dates and will communicate further about this in due course.



### **Public exam update**

While the issue of public exams is most relevant to parents in Y11 and Y13 (who have received fuller details) all parents are undoubtedly following the ongoing discussions about 2021 public exams.

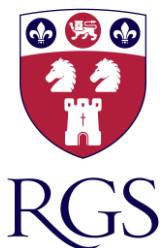
The guidance is being drip-fed to us with JCQ producing a significant update to their guidance on Friday and the exam boards are due to release further information this week. The JCQ documents give more clarity on the process of awarding grades and we are now working through the detail of what we are required to produce this year. This reiterates that we are required to make holistic judgements based on evidence that should have been gathered through the course and we are required to tell students the evidence we will be using to make grade judgements. I hope we have already done much of this at the recent Parents' Conferences but we intend to confirm this after Easter once we have seen what more the exam boards produce. However, we must not tell students the final grades we are recommending and we are required to report any undue pressure placed on teachers. It is also worth noting that the evidence required will differ to a certain extent between subjects and also differ significantly between exam boards.

While we already have strong evidence for many students, there will be many others who still want to improve their final grades so we have to provide further opportunities to show improvement or consolidate a position. We may use exam board materials in giving students these opportunities or we might decide to use our own - each approach is equally valid. Contrary to coverage in the press a few weeks ago, students cannot be told which questions will be coming up in any assessments as this amounts to giving "inappropriate support" and will invalidate the resulting evidence, nor will they be able to access the mark schemes but the question banks will be publicly available. These assessments are not intended to be formal exams: indeed, the JCQ guidance states specifically that the exam board papers are not to be used as a replacement for formal exams. We therefore intend to use them for in-class assessments and plan to offer two opportunities per subject, spreading them out so that students can receive feedback on the first of these and allow them to show improvement in the second. We will publish a timetable that caters for those with access arrangements or extra time allowance at the start of next term, with assessments finishing by 21<sup>st</sup> May. I recognise that this does make for a busy summer term there should be plenty of scope for revision and consolidation within this period.

In the meantime, I would encourage students and parents to take note of the conversations from the Parents' Conferences and focus on the positives. Those students who still want to improve their grades should be working towards doing the best they can in the summer term in-class assessments while those who already have a secure platform and solid evidence of a good performance should remain calm and just keep working steadily. We will be looking to award the best grades we can.

### **Independent Schools in the media**

I am sure many parents have seen press coverage about allegations of sexual abuse in schools prompted by disclosures on the *everyone's invited* website and the ongoing broader debate around sexual harassment, abuse and assault following the tragic death of Sarah Everard. I do not think that any institution can be complacent about the



prevalence of these issues in society. However, I hope that our young people feel they can bring any concerns to us and trust that they will be treated seriously. We in turn will continue to do our best to educate our students about how to conduct themselves in society. In my view this issue is of equal importance to the topic of inclusion that I have written about previously. We must continue to raise awareness, discuss with our children and debate these issues openly with the intention of promoting meaningful positive change. We have and will continue to talk about such matters in assemblies, in PSHE lessons and through visiting speakers, always with the goal of supporting our young people to be inquisitive, informed and socially aware. I look forward to keeping parents updated on how we continue these debates in school.

#### **Incident on Eskdale Terrace, March 30th 2021**

Finally, we have received a report that one of our female students was approached on leaving school yesterday, reportedly by a group of males in a white car. The police have been informed and the student is safe and well, but I wanted to remind all families to be vigilant and aware of personal safety on any public street.

In the meantime, I hope that you and your children are all able to enjoy a good rest over the Easter break.

With all good wishes,

**Geoffrey Stanford**

Headmaster