

15 May 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that this letter finds you all safe and well. It has been a challenging few weeks in many ways, but it is at times like these that you really do notice and appreciate the small things in life. For me this week, it has been chatting to staff and students in school who I have not seen for some time and speaking with Year 11 students and their families as we discuss their plans for Sixth Form. I was encouraged to hear how each were getting on in these unprecedented times and warmed by the kindness and respect that is being shown by our community.

Like many of you I am sure, my week began by watching the Prime Minister's address last Sunday about the plans for schools. Specifically for secondary schools, this centred around how Year 10 and 12 students can be provided with some face-to-face opportunity with their teachers before we break up for the Summer. Much of what was announced, and subsequent guidance, has unfortunately left us with more questions than it answered.

I have been engaging in discussions with other Headteachers from across the county and there is as much variation in their interpretation of this guidance as there are letters in the alphabet. But the absolute consensus was that safety comes first, as was the fact that we must do what is right and possible in our own contexts.

In order to help shape our thinking, we will be writing to the families of Year 10 and Year 12 students asking them to complete a short survey to help us gain an understanding of priorities, challenges and concerns. We know that we will likely be faced with similar or increased challenges well into the new academic year involving more children, but as the situation is changing so quickly we will hold off from surveying those families for the time being.

We have been continuing to develop our remote learning solutions and will be moving to the next phase of our Microsoft Office 365 development during May half term. This will enable us to begin to explore how we can start to use Teams to support student learning. But as with any IT developments, we need to make sure staff are given time not only to learn how to use the software and understand what it can do to enhance their lessons but also the time to plan what those lessons might look like. Many of our staff have already started to develop some pre-recorded videos which I know have been well received. Others are regularly using surveys to set and mark questions and using many nationally-available resources to help supplement lessons and provide different levels of content delivery and support for our students.

Our systems of checking in with students from a wellbeing perspective seems to be working well and our priority remains to continue to develop this remote learning and support for all students.

In what is proving to be a long absence from school and regular routine for us all, you may find it useful to read the Wellbeing tips provided each week in the Families' Bulletin. In particular, our SEND team has put together some fantastic activity packs to promote Mental Health, which you and your whole family may enjoy. They are all on the new Wellbeing section of our website, [here](#).

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Finally, thank you to everyone who has submitted their suggestions for names for our new 'small schools'. We've received many fantastic ideas and I am looking forward to reading through the full list this weekend and narrowing them down to a shortlist. We will let you know the four winning names in the coming weeks.

Keep safe and have a restful weekend.

Warm regards,



Ms Jo Meloni  
Headteacher

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