

8 October 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope that you, and your families, are well.

During the course of this week we have experienced two members of our staff community receiving positive tests (unrelated to one another). Our procedures and policies have ensured that these incidents have caused minimum disruption to the smooth running of the school, whilst ensuring our community remains safe. As cases continue to rise both nationally and locally, we will address each incident in the same calm and controlled manner. It is a great help that we do this in a united way with our parent body. Thank you for your support and I am pleased to report both members of staff are well in themselves.

### **Our School**

With all that has occurred over the past 6 months, it would have been easy to put teaching and learning on the back burner. However, the period of lockdown led, in many cases, to the exact opposite. The enforced remote learning has afforded many staff some of their most extensive CPD.

### **Lessons from lockdown**

During lockdown the RGS engaged in extensive staff training in digital learning, much of which was run by staff, for staff. Many of the skills developed are just as valuable now when we are teaching the students in School; we are actively promoting Blended Learning where teaching is a blend of both face-to-face traditional teaching, and student paced digital learning. This has changed the way some staff set and record tasks, led to a resource bank of lessons, tests and quizzes to aid retrieval practice, led to creative ways to explain topics and improved our ability to track progress. Furthermore, with the help of parent feedback, we have worked hard to embed consistency in provision; this work will continue as we face some disruption to attendance because of Covid-19.

### **Spaced Retrieval**

One of our key areas for development this year is a keen focus on spaced retrieval practice. The basic principle is that students have regular low stakes tests and quizzes to check their knowledge and understanding so that it becomes cemented into the long-term memory. The aim of this is to free up space in the short-term memory to allow the brain space to apply that knowledge correctly. To simplify, when you drive a car, you have done it so often that you don't need to think about it, the knowledge is cemented into the long-term memory, it has become part of you. We want our students to experience the same with their knowledge so that it can be recalled with a real sense of fluency. We will aim to move away from the classic question, "does everyone understand?" to the more useful question, "what do you understand?" We will regularly check the knowledge in a supportive manner. This slight change in approach will allow us to review our schemes of work to ensure we are allowing opportunities to continually revisit and test the knowledge (in a low stakes fashion).

### **Teams and iPads**

As shared previously, we have experienced some significant IT challenges at the start of this term. I am pleased to report that these are well on the way to resolution. All boys should now be accessing Teams and the VLE, where staff will be sharing classwork (as in Blended Learning above) and homework. This is for both our boys on site and isolating at home. The Year 7 iPad Launch has been brought forward a calendar year so that the boys can access the cloud-based resources easily, and this scheme has also been opened to other Year Groups for boys who do not have their own device because they are new to us, or simply would like a new model. The portal closes at midnight on Monday 19 October.

Kind regards

**Alex Wallace**

**Deputy Headmaster**