

HEADMASTER'S LETTER

5 October 2020



Dear Parent

SETTLING IN

Boys new to the School have settled in well. We are very conscious that our youngest students are not really aware that they have had a different start to their grammar school career than would ordinarily be the case. It has not, for example, been appropriate to hold our usual Junior and Senior assemblies; they are traditional in nature but a very important start to the day. The Queen's Hall is, fortunately, large enough to socially distance two forms at a time - the Deputy Headmaster, Mr Wallace, and I will be holding assemblies for Year 7 this week and other year groups in the following weeks. Mr Wallace will be writing to Year 7 parents about his Ethos of Learning event which will be 'virtual' this year.

Not having taught Year 7 Music for 20 years, it is super to be in the classroom again and teach as part of the 'Circus' (the RGS word for rotating foundation subjects!) and therefore get to know many more students well. In the year 2000, I was still using a blackboard and chalk, a 'Coomber' tape recorder/CD player; any video clips required me to book a TV and VCR player on a trolley which my Sixth Form musicians kindly wheeled to my music room. All, of course, now on my laptop (subject to IT reliability).

Year 12 are getting to grips with their A level studies and boys new to the School are integrating well and playing an excellent part in the life of the Sixth Form. A reminder that the Sixth Form team issued a video welcome last week - this contains important messages. If you missed it, here is the [link](#).

SORRY I MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY

I normally invite Year 7 students for a carton of orange juice and a snack during the week of their 12th birthday, in small groups. The current circumstances are not conducive to these gatherings. Form Tutors have commented that their tutees have asked about them - I will arrange something later in the term to meet your sons.

CATCHING UP

There is a balance required in making sure that students are on track without over-zealous testing, the teacher and student responsibilities and, whilst putting in the framework for boys to make progress, considering their well-being. Mr Wallace will be in touch later in the week with some thoughts on this. Please, however, support your son at home, encourage him to talk to his teachers if he has any concerns and support us as we use our range of measures to ensure that he maximises his potential. As ever, do not hesitate to contact the School if you have concerns.

There is speculation about public examinations - as I am writing this at the weekend an announcement may precede your reading my letter. There are many unknowns at present and this is a worry for us all as there is unlikely to be a solution that will satisfy everyone. As soon as we know, we will inform you about the implications. It is very possible that a new incarnation of Centre Assessment Grades may form part of the grading process - this should be a real incentive to boys to stay on top of their work and to do their very best throughout the year.

GOOD TO BE BACK

I am so pleased to see sports running again. If you follow our Twitter accounts (start with @RGSHW) you will see that rugby, rowing, fencing, sailing, hockey and cricket have been taking place. Our Sports staff and FRORGS were delighted to welcome Year 7 parents to the Rugby Welcome Day and, despite the weather, a good number of boys in all years participated in Saturday's training and internal fixtures.

The Music Department is running rehearsals for a range of ensembles and we are looking at some options for performance opportunities in line with the area specific guidance.

The CCF, too, have been able to start their training - as you might imagine, the British Army (who oversees CCF provision) provides robust guidance to schools. Boys have been out on activities this weekend and will be out again in two weeks' time.

IT'S GREAT WHEN IT WORKS

You will be aware that we have had significant IT issues since the start of term. Many of the larger issues have been addressed and further investment, in addition to the large amounts spent in the spring, will be needed in the near future to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

We have recruited a new Head of IT and Digital Strategies, who is working her notice period in her existing role leading a university IT department, and we have appointed a new interim manager to lead the department, starting today.

To say that it has been frustrating for staff and boys would be an understatement. Particularly so as the lockdown resulted in 'necessity being the mother of invention' causing staff to migrate quickly into digital teaching strategies and changing their practice for good. Staff were in school four days before the start of the teaching term, to undertake IT training. This did not go to plan, so we will be having an **additional training day** for staff on **Thursday 22 October**. More details will follow but, to be clear, Wednesday 21 October will be a full day to 1540, not the usual early finish for half term as the Thursday is a training day in school for staff and a study at home day for students, not additional holiday. A well trained, confident staff is essential to deliver online work for boys in isolation, for example, and to ensure consistency in quality across departments.

OPEN EVENTS

We would, by now, have held our Open Evenings and would be preparing for Open Mornings. If you did not get the opportunity to see it, our Virtual Open Event is [here](#).

Whilst we will offer tours of the boarding house for prospective boarders, we do believe it is neither right for our own students and staff or for the prep/primary schools to be conducting tours of the main school. We have some plans to connect with Year 6s and their parents, and information will be on the website soon.

KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

After a significant amount of necessary tree surgery over the last year or two, our Estates Team have bags of logs for sale. They are good value and the money raised from their sale will be put back into the 'Grounds' budget to help with the purchase of new equipment. Please log onto ParentPay for further details.

YEAR 11 PARENTS' AFTERNOON – from Mr Eve

The additional Year 11 Parents Afternoon that was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 13 October has been postponed. We are currently investigating online parents evening systems we can use to hold the meeting later this term.

In the meantime, if you have any concerns regarding your son's academic progress since the start of term, please email his subject teachers directly.

Best wishes

Philip Wayne