

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 25 January 2021

Dear Parent

See amid the winter's snow!

It's Sunday lunchtime and, in previous years, I would have been watching the weather forecasts like a hawk and indulging in my obsession to try and keep the School open! 'Snow days' are now chiefly a thing of the past, I hope, as our online provision means that 'business as usual' can prevail.

We will, of course, communicate separately with families who are making use of our 'key worker' provision and Mr Scourfield has a channel of communication with boarding families should there be any change.

Back to the future

The Secretary of State for Education is due to make an announcement this week about the possible return of students to school. It is obviously a dynamic and changing environment, and we appreciate that, whilst frustrating for us all, there are many factors which the Government needs to take into account. However, it seems that there may be a move to a further extension to the lockdown. In preparation for this possibility, we will provide further clarity, over the next week or two, on assessment, homework and deadlines for this extended period. Balancing this, we will also share further detail on our co-curricular provision, a comprehensive package including sport and music, to support your sons and encourage some time away from screens.

Furthermore, on Friday, whilst your sons were enjoying a well-deserved break, our staff shared ideas of how best to engage the boys in online lessons. We have two very comprehensive platforms (Office365 and the VLE); now we are working on how best to engage the boys when all their lessons are in this format. An eight-period day online has its own challenges for young boys. We have instigated weekly remote 'approaches to teaching' sharing sessions, again to better support your sons; this is an overwhelmingly positive development.

We were very pleased to receive so many responses to our online provision. It has meant that the School has a high level of awareness of the ability of boys to access devices and the internet, and thus means we are better able to support the individual. Furthermore, the respondents informed us that their sons were finding online provision to be working well and that, overall, the main message was the 'more interactive, the better'. This will feed into our ongoing training, but please continue to send feedback, via emails to your son's Head of Year or Form Tutor, or any of the Senior Team. We must all work together during this time as our contact with the boys is less than it would be were we on site.

There were several comments in the survey about a preference for the use of cameras during 'live lessons'. Whilst this will not be everyone's 'cup of tea', I would recommend that boys learn how to create a background - desert island, classroom etc so that they are less self-conscious if asked by the teacher to put their cameras on. I must stress that teachers have varying circumstances which may be a barrier for some to use cameras themselves. When I work from home, for example, I can guarantee that my dog will make a cameo appearance - I am relaxed about it, but not everyone would be!

Virtual Social Events

The Burns Night Zoom Quiz was very well supported with a good range of questions, an auction and the final flourish - the customary, guttural 'Address to the Haggis'. Many thanks to our 'Friends of' Committees for organising the event. As well as the necessary fundraising, it is important that we, as a school community, stay connected.

The next event is being organised by our Parents' Association - a Sushi Master Class. Details are [here](#).

Progress Grades for Years 11 and 13

At this time of year, we would usually be in the midst of the January Mock Exams for Years 11 and 13, the results of which act as an important signpost for students on their journey towards the GCSE and A level exams in the summer. The current lockdown has prompted us to delay the exams until the students are back in school. We are, however, mindful that an indication of academic progress is important for students and parents, particularly at this relatively early stage in the year, when many subjects have yet to complete their syllabuses and there is time for students to identify areas for improvement. We will, therefore, be issuing a set of progress grades (for both Attainment and Attitude to Learning) to our Year 11s and Year 13s. Year 11 grades will be issued this Friday (January 29); Year 13 grades will be issued next Thursday (February 4). What's important to note is that these grades are not predictions or centre assessment grades, nor will they form any part of the calculation of centre assessment grades whenever the Government asks us to submit those. We hope, though, that they will give you and your son an indication of his current 'working at' grade at a time when there is still much work to be done over the final months of his GCSE or A level course.

Mathsupials

British Mathematical Olympiad Round 1 and Senior Kangaroo Competition - in the second half of last term, 156 Year 11, 12 and 13 boys sat the Senior Mathematical Challenge. Those students who scored in the top 10% of entries in the whole of the UK qualify to take part in further rounds, with 6000 students invited to do the Senior Kangaroo, of which roughly the top 1000 are invited to sit the British Olympiad. Seven students qualified for the Senior Kangaroo, an online competition, and a further four were invited to sit the prestigious British Mathematical Olympiad Round 1, a 2 ½ hour written competition.

The results from these competitions are now in and we are extremely proud to report that:

- Harry Langford attained a Distinction in the British Olympiad, which places him in the top 250 students nationally who qualified
- Aditya Mahesh, Alex Curran and Nakul Nataraj achieved a Merit in the British Olympiad
- Fraser Clark, Shanker Narayan, Sam Denison and James Edwicker attained a Merit in the Senior Kangaroo

Our congratulations to all of them on these excellent accomplishments.

With best wishes

Philip Wayne