

4 February 2021

Dear Parents

The unknown is scary. Sadly, that is still the case for many areas of education, but we hope to have some answers soon. The DfE consultation regarding summer grades for Year 11 and Year 13 closed last week and we hope to get clear guidance in a few weeks' time. We also hope that by then we will know what sort of return we can expect on 8 March. Despite this unknown, we have been hugely impressed by the hard work and diligence demonstrated by both of these exam year groups. The commitment and resilience they continue to show is exactly what those leaders in the workplace are desiring from their employees. We continually hear about the negative impact of the pandemic on education, but every day we are regularly seeing the positives. The attendance and commitment to learning during this lockdown from your sons has been impressive. Thank you for your support in this.

Lights, Camera, Action

As from Monday, we would like all students to have their camera on at the start of registration and start of lessons. Our aim, during this period of lockdown, is to try and do our best to replicate what would be occurring in the classroom. Body language and eye contact are essential for a teacher to deliver effectively. In face to face times I can readily see when a student's eyes are glazing over and they would be willing to part with all the money in the world if I would just stop talking. However, when you are just talking into a screen of icons it is very difficult to read the temperature of the "room". Some of my poor pupils have had to listen to my drivel for far longer than anyone should!

To add to this, having cameras on also brings a bit more interaction and community. I have been trialling the cameras with my classes this week and it has been great to see the students and for them to see one another; it is a bit of much needed social interaction too. Finally, one of our key roles is to prepare students for life after school, which will, no doubt, be a world with zoom and cameras on in the workplace.

That said, we understand that some boys are working on desktops which don't have a camera. If this is the case could you please email Mrs Hewitt (jeh@rgshw.com) so she can inform the staff. We also appreciate a small number of students might find being on screen very difficult for a number of reasons; we do not want to cause unnecessary anxiety so please email your son's Head of Year if they would rather have their icon instead. Lessons are recorded on Teams for Safeguarding reasons and we expect professional behaviour from our students at all times (our remote learning policy can be found [here](#)).

We ask for your support in this next step in our remote learning provision. Below are the guidelines we will introduce on Monday:

- All students should have their cameras on for registration and the start of a lesson.
- All students should blur their background if possible. If not possible, students are to avoid having personal pictures or a bed in the background. We would encourage students to work from a living room or kitchen but appreciate this may not be possible.
- Cameras should remain on for discussion and explanation as the teacher sees fit.
- Cameras can be turned off when students are set work.
- If a student cannot access his camera, parents must contact Mrs Hewitt (jeh@rgshw.com), who will inform his teachers.
- If a pupil has significant concerns with having the camera on, parents should contact the Head of Year.

Student Email Contact with Staff

Interacting with one another nowadays is so quick and easy. I remember having to contact my school friends using the rotary dial on the family landline. By the time you had wound each digit around, you had forgotten who you were calling, let alone what it was about! Can you imagine facing an emergency and having to use the rotary dial for 999? The house would have burnt down by the time the phone started ringing! I digress, the point is, communication now is almost instantaneous and with this rapid-fire messaging and receiving we sometimes forget our etiquette. We are delighted that students feel comfortable to contact members of staff, but please urge your son to ensure he is maintaining a high level of professional conduct. He should be polite and top and tail with "Sir/Ma'am and Yours sincerely" for example. I know students do not mean any offence, but we need to hang on to these important habits.

The Same Boat

This week is Children's Mental Health Week. Students will be discussing the topic during registration towards the end of the week. [Practical ideas](#) will be shared to ensure we are looking out for one another.

An old pal of mine from the West Country works in the film industry. He recently came across this poem by Julie Sheldon about lockdown. His young daughter is reading the poem and he has provided the footage. It is a lovely clip, which reminds us of the importance of supporting one another during this time. Have a watch [here](#) if you have 2 minutes.

iPad Support

Our students and staff are now very reliant on IT and, for many, iPads. We have some families in challenging circumstances who have older iPads – if any families have iPads in good working order, that are surplus to requirements and that are compatible with IOS 13 or newer, and could donate them to the School for distribution, we would be pleased to hear from you. They will be wiped clean before use. If you can support in this matter please do contact ithelp@rgshw.com

Parents' Evening

On Monday we have the Year 11 Parents' Evening. Normally a large part of the meeting focuses on the mocks. These are yet to occur, but it is imperative we still have this opportunity to celebrate the successes and offer some clear direction to students as we head towards the end of the journey for Year 11.

Kind regards

Alex Wallace
Deputy Headmaster