

HEADMASTER'S LETTER

5 January 2021

Dear Parent

The plan to start the term with online learning for all students was with the intention of getting the school up-and-running as soon as possible. It turned out to be the right thing as it has resulted in less last-minute pivoting. The announcement at 20:00 last night has thrown up some interesting and vital questions which we shall work through as quickly, but as thoroughly, as we can.

Lockdown

As you are aware the National Lockdown will come into force on Wednesday 6 January. During this period, the School will remain open for the children of key workers and 'vulnerable' children. The latter is a broad category. All other students will learn remotely.

BTEC

Our only 'vocational' course is the BTEC PE. At the time of writing, the exam planned for tomorrow will go ahead, at School.

Summer Exams

The Prime Minister stated that he 'did not think that it was, in these circumstances, possible or fair for all exams to go ahead this summer as normal'. The devil will, of course, be in the detail and I would urge parents and boys not to read this as 'exams are cancelled'. Various scenarios could come into play but whatever happens it is certain that schools will be expected to contribute to the grading process with sound evidence behind it. Therefore, the advice is to keep working, learning and revising. Have a listen to this [YouTube clip](#) from the 'Today Programme'.

Mocks/Internal exams

Miss Munday has sent a 'holding note' to parents of students in Years 11, 12 and 13. We are discussing a range of scenarios, due to be finalised on Thursday after which information will be sent out.

Boarding

Mr Scourfield has written an update to parents of boarders today.

Remote Education

As a school community, we learned a great deal in the Summer Term about the various means of delivering a remote education. We start today in a different, better place than in March 2020; though I understand that expectations, too, are greater. Please do keep the feedback coming in as we always strive to ensure our provision is meeting those expectations of us. Equally as important is that you support us by ensuring that your son has somewhere quiet to work, gets up in time for the registration of his form, and follows his timetable to the hour. We have asked all teachers to ensure that there is interaction between them and the boys during the lesson. This does not necessarily mean a re-enactment of Ben Hur; it could be pre-recorded content, audio and/or video conferencing or online 'messaging' support. There will also be time in a lesson where students are set tasks without direct teacher intervention, just as it would be in the classroom.

Parents should remember that the school day includes break and lunch time, PE and games - Sixth Formers also have private study and lectures - so your son may not be fully directed throughout the school day.

Having not taught Music for many years (and Year 7 for over 20) until September, I was very pleased to teach my first 'live online lesson' today - I was so impressed with the eagerness of the boys to participate, their digital discipline and their patience with their Headmaster. It was super to have the opportunity to interact with them in a different way. I'm very pleased to announce to Year 7 parents that your sons' iPads are due for delivery, finally, towards the end of this week. It will take a week or so to sort them out and to arrange a safe collection process – we will, therefore, be in touch soon about this.

Covid Testing

Senior staff put considerable work over the holiday into preparing for the 'mass testing' process. Although this has now been hindered by the lockdown, twenty of our staff have, today, trained as Covid Lateral Testers. This means that we can test boarders, staff and boys who are coming into School during the lockdown. We will roll out testing to the whole school next half term, as and when required.

I am aware that this is a tough time for many families whether staff, students or parents. I wish you well in the coming weeks.

As ever, please do not hesitate to contact the School if you require any support or information.

With best wishes

Philip Wayne