



4<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Since I last wrote to you we have continued to look at ways in which our students can have a better experience during these weeks of the lockdown. As I have said to you before, this situation is new to all of us and we do need to adapt as we gain experience.

We are increasing the number of lessons in which the student sees the teacher as at least part of their online learning. I know that the staff who have been using this approach find it effective and I believe that many students will as well.

As this will still be new to many of my colleagues we are going to increase our live input gradually over the next couple of weeks. By Friday every member of staff will have taught at least part of one lesson online; during the week following all Year 10 courses should include some direct teaching and Years 8 and 9 should experience it in at least one of their English, Maths and Science lessons. Direct teaching is already well established in Year 12 and I am expecting that it will continue to grow.

The system we are using is Microsoft Teams. This is what it involves:

- i) Your son or daughter needs to download The Microsoft Teams App to their phone, tablet or computer. There is no charge for this: he or she selects Microsoft Teams from the App Store and enters his/her school email address and password. The device is then logged onto the system.
- ii) The student then taps the calendar tab, which will list the invitations from teachers to join in online activities.
- iii) By tapping the join button the student becomes part of the lesson.

In addition:

- iv) We ask that you ensure that your son or daughter is suitably dressed and in an appropriate location.
- v) It is possible to change the background if you do not wish your home setting to be seen by others.
- vi) It is also possible to turn off the camera or mute and unmute the microphone. (Teachers do find, however, that it is helpful to see the face of at least one member of their class.)

As always I shall be interested to hear your reactions as our work continues to adapt and evolve.

The second theme of my letter will not come as a surprise. Anyone who remembers their own school days will know that no teacher can be assured of the attention of every student throughout every lesson. Day by day schools work to keep the numbers of the inattentive and the disengaged to a minimum. Remote learning exaggerates that problem. After a fortnight of remote learning we took stock and identified those students whose response to the opportunities offered was very limited or even non-existent.

They were at that point quite a number of these. I accept that part of the explanation is our own gradual adjustment to this new situation. I accept as well that the barriers are often practical. This work relies on facilities which not everybody has. In response to this we have been speaking with individual students and parents to discover where there is anything the school can do to help. There is, for example, a daily flow of packets going out from the school by post, containing material for households that are struggling most with the practical implications of the lockdown.

But there are also cases where it is the students themselves who have chosen not to engage. There will be a price to be paid for this in the longer term, for when normal schooling does resume the curriculum will have to move forward at a normal pace. Months of been activity could be a lasting disadvantage and I do ask those with an adult perspective to make this clear.

This naturally raises the question of when school life as we have known it will resume. Like you, I await the government's promised announcement with much interest. I hope that its eventual scheme will command the confidence of every parent, for although my letter has dealt entirely with learning, at the back of all our minds is the priority of safety.

I hope that you and your family remain well.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Waters