

24th March 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing to provide a further update with regards to the current circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Distance Learning

I am very pleased with the start that our pupils have made to their distance learning. I am delighted to be getting reports from the teachers about how they are responding. Structure and routine will be very important to them and we will continue to do all we can to support our pupils in this.

It has also been lovely to receive such positive feedback about the efforts of the teachers. They are fully committed to providing the best education that we can for our pupils. We are all trying to adapt quickly to this new form of working. It is inevitable that there are things that we will be able to tweak as we go along. I stressed to staff and pupils that it is useful to have these two weeks before the 'Easter holiday' so that we can review how this is going. No-one has done this before so we are not going to get everything right straight away. We would welcome any feedback: Mr Marshall has already posted this request on classrooms for the pupils. If any parents have observations please do contact: Mrs Summers (Nursery and Infants, Mrs Knott (Juniors) or Mr James (Senior School).

A few points already:

- Mrs Knott has asked Juniors children not to post messages to each other in the comments section of their classroom. This generates an email to the teacher every time!
- There will be a need for balance in terms of the activities. Staff have been quite keen to "show what they can do" in terms of hangouts but some quiet individual activities will also be important.
- At Hulme we establish guidelines for staff in terms of having to respond to emails. They often work late into the evening and at weekends, but I am clear that no-one is expected to respond to an email at these times, even if it is from me! The same applies to our pupils - staff may well be preparing resources and posting material on virtual classrooms which generates emails for students. Please do encourage them to switch off their chromebook at the end of the school day and to take these notifications off their phones. They must not feel pressure to be looking at their work all day and all evening, and need to have sensible boundaries for screen time. They do need to be able to relax, and I would say this as an English teacher, but now would be a good time to pick up a book!

GCSE and A Levels

Parents and students in these year groups will be anxious about how all of this is going to work; I completely understand this. I would urge the students to keep studying as all will have the opportunity to take exams if they are unhappy with the exam board calculated grades. I have promised to provide further information as soon as we are able to. We are awaiting clarification on the process of how schools should arrive at their judgement grades, and the rules surrounding this. I would reiterate what I have said to the students; that we will do all we can to ensure that our pupils are not disadvantaged by this upheaval. Please can I ask parents not to contact teachers to ask about individual grades as they will not be able to answer these questions. This afternoon the DfE published the answers to some FAQs on this topic. I have pasted the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

Key Workers Provision

I am very proud of the staff who have volunteered for this work and would like to thank parents for their sensible approach. The government has now been clear that parents should only use this service if there is no safe alternative, and this has been the case with our pupils attending.

And finally

Thank you again for all your supportive messages and for the many offers of help. I will continue to communicate as regularly as I can and will keep doing assemblies - thank you to those of you who listened in yesterday morning. The link is here if any other parents would like to listen.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15ISppXK6HIYm2MtdJ5qTgBOGaRUmXSNj/view?usp=sharing>

I will be delivering the Juniors assembly on Thursday. Mrs Knott has been doing live assemblies and I've just watched Mrs Summers' "google hangout" which I hope Nursery & Infants parents have seen. Please do follow school on Facebook and me on Twitter @OhgsPrincipal where I will attempt to be funny to keep everyone's spirits up - it will amuse me if nothing else!

Please keep safe everyone.

Craig Mairs
(Principal)