

Headteacher's Update: 22nd June 2020

Dear parents and carers

I hope you have had a good weekend, and all is well with you and your families.

Schools should just not be empty of young people and it was wonderful to see Year 10 students, as well as some Year 12 students, back in school last week. Let's hope it won't be long before we can see more students returning. In the meantime, a few messages for this week:

- Following feedback, we have sent this update by email as well as the usual Gateway/text messages. For the rest of this term at least, we will be trialling the sending of some messages via both email **and** Gateway/text. Some parents tell us they find email more effective than Gateway messages, though we know from previous surveys that opinion tends to be split on this, which is why we are going to trial using both channels simultaneously for key messages. The golden rule remains that the primary means of communication is via Gateway/text links to the website and all communications will be sent using this method with just some messages being sent via both. Please **do not stop checking the Gateway app** or else you may miss important information.
- Thank you to everyone who completed the **parents and carers survey** we sent out last week; the feedback has been invaluable. I have summarised the responses, as well as offering some responses of my own, [here](#). We are delighted that over 93% of you agree we have done a very good job since school partially closed, that 96% feel communication has been open and effective and that 90% feel the quality of work set has generally been good. It is also reassuring to see that the vast majority of you feel your children have coped at least reasonably well with things. Thank you, as ever, for your support.
- You should have received a [letter](#) about starting to use **Zoom** (alongside Teams) for lessons from 6th July. Whilst we appreciate this may feel like yet another change, in practice it oughtn't be very big one and having the facility to see one another's faces on screen should help us continue to improve the online lessons. Introducing this now gives us a couple of weeks to try it out before the summer holidays so that, if remote learning is still necessary in September, we will be in a stronger position. Your child should have received an email to their school accounts by now, inviting them to set up a Zoom account. **Please make sure they have seen this and have followed the instructions.**
- Some of you have asked whether it is still possible to buy a **Chromebook** even though the first deadline has passed. The answer is yes! The portal will re-open again within the next few days (Miss Dixon will be in touch as soon as it is) with a deadline of mid-July for orders, meaning that devices should arrive by mid-August. Parents of Year 6 children will also be able to take advantage of this and we will be writing to them separately.
- In the absence of the usual exams, we will be running end of year assessments for students in Years 7–10 during the week commencing 13th July. Separate letters will shortly be sent out to parents and carers of Year 10 and Key Stage 3 students. **Please note, that we consider these to be very 'low stakes' tests and absolutely do not want children getting worried about them.** Most of them will simply be extended online quizzes with multiple choice questions. The primary aims are to encourage students to do some revision to help consolidate key knowledge and, above all, to help us see what the main gaps

are in learning so that we can make plans to address these next year. We will certainly not be using the results for making decisions about setting or anything like that.

- **Year 12** will be having fuller mock exams and Mrs Jennings is communicating with students about these separately.
- We are looking forward to seeing the faces of **Year 11 students** at 3.30pm on Thursday for a [special assembly](#). Mrs Feast has emailed students and will copy this to Teams and SMHW.
- We are also in the process of organising 'virtual' versions of **Awards Evening and Founders Day**, so watch out for these.
- Finally, I am sure you have all seen the news over the weekend about the government expressing its **wish to see all students back in school by September**. As ever, I do not know any more than what has been reported in the press but, for what it is worth, I sincerely hope this is possible. We will certainly make sure we are ready to go if we are given the green light and we are already busy planning for various different scenarios. On the other hand, careful examination of what has actually been said does suggest some of the newspapers might be getting a little carried away and it is also possible that the government was perhaps thinking more about primary schools than secondaries. It does seem increasingly likely that all students will be able to come back to school on some basis in September, but we wait to see whether or not this means full-time. Further information has been promised in the next 2–3 weeks and I'm sure you will all be looking out for this as eagerly as we are.

Kind regards

Gwyn Williams