27th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope everyone is keeping safe and healthy.

Those students who are in school are doing extremely well, both with their work and other activities which are broadening their horizons, whilst also supporting others in the community. We also continue to receive some excellent work from students who are at home. ‘Microsoft Teams’ seems to have been positively received by the vast majority and the communication between staff and students has been productive.

I am aware, of course, that some families have limited internet access or use of electronic devices. Although this is our preferred method of both setting and receiving work, there are alternative methods, such as the students accessing the assignments on their mobile phones (‘Teams’ is free to download), then completing the work on paper and sending a photograph via email. If this is not possible, then simply keeping the work until it can be returned is acceptable as a last resort. If you have any problems at all, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant subject teacher.

We have set a lot of work this week, although this is likely to be reduced slightly as the weeks go on. Some students have been anxious that they have not been able to complete everything and may miss the deadlines set. We all have a sense of perspective about this situation, so please don’t panic. As long as this is communicated in advance, we will be quite flexible. The message is – do what you can.

That said, it is important to remember that, once this period of uncertainty is over, it will be difficult for everyone to return to the routine of school and work, therefore it is important to maintain the ‘habits of learning’ as much as possible, whilst also maintaining a balance with physical exercise, relaxation and virtual communication with family and friends.

I am expecting some further news from Ofqual (the exams regulator) next week, regarding how grades will be awarded for GCSE and vocational courses. This will be a busy time, but please rest assured that the teachers and subject leaders are proven experts in assessment, making ethical, informed decisions about a student’s ability, based on the range of information we already gather.
It is essential that Year 11 students continue to revise and prepare for the next stage in their education. Every year, I warn students to take their mock exams seriously “just in case” and every year this falls on largely deaf ears, as understandably they are deemed to be “just a practice”. I urge them not to make this mistake now; there is a possibility that students will have the opportunity to take some exams in September. As for younger students, maybe the message regarding mock exams will be heard next year?

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Best wishes

Andrew Taylor

Headteacher