



19 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

It would seem we are now in a time where change appears to be a daily constant. This week, I would therefore like to offer information on where we are as a College and share our provisional thinking as we move towards the end of Term 6, with the caveat that much may shift in the next week or month. It should be read in conjunction with the attached document.

I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the overwhelming positive feedback both myself and my staff have received from parents and indeed students throughout this term. We had hoped that our community was strong enough to withstand the challenges posed by this pandemic but it was always going to be a big test. We understand that there have been challenges along the way and some families have faced very difficult times. I have enormous respect and appreciation for those who have maintained an optimistic and constructive outlook despite real difficulties.

Staff are also working hard, in similar circumstances and the difference it makes to receive an encouraging email or contact is huge. We are also, as always, open to hearing feedback with a solutions-based approach. I am proud and grateful to work in such a community. It is important to be clear that we are bound by the public health and social distancing restrictions in place. We completely understand that it is frustrating for parents and students to be at home, however this is not as a result of any lack of desire to provide by the College. We are currently offering (and planning to offer further provision) beyond that which we are “guided” for almost all year groups.

It is likely to be true that coming out of lockdown both as a country and as a College will be more complex than going into it was 13 weeks ago. There will be, as there has already been, a full spectrum of experiences across our community. Change is often unsettling; change this variable on this scale is unlikely to suit everyone all the time.

This is all managed against the backdrop of hyperbolic media headlines and social media, individual perspectives or personal trauma. Children will always be healthier and happier when they see calm and constructive adults. It will be important to focus our attention on what is possible at each stage in our setting and what can be achieved rather than focusing on how far away it feels from the ‘old sense of normal’ which will only highlight differences and deficits that none of us can prevent. This process will be a marathon and not a sprint.

We are approaching the next few months as likely to involve several different phases. In this second phase of June and July, coming out of lockdown will involve gradually more contact for some groups. Whilst this is hard for some who want more, we are equally aware that others will



struggle to leave the security of environments they have been in for the last 3 months. Equity of consideration must be afforded to all. I set out what this might look like in an accompanying document to this letter.

However, it may be useful for me to add at this stage that I can only plan for matters upon which I have received guidance. At the time of writing I have received no guidance about the summer holidays, no guidance on September provision, no guidance on the exam process for next year and no guidance on university decisions or College placements for 2020-21 or 2021-22 among other equally pressing matters. Leadership at any level, including government, in a time of pandemic is complex and difficult; we are all having to exercise patience and understanding!

As an example, today we received the latest announcement about catch-up funding through the media headlines with promises of detail to follow. Whilst this is indeed welcome support, I do not yet know how much this equates to per school, when that funding becomes available or what restrictions will be placed upon its use. We do know from research that effective and lasting “catch-up” is not a quick fix achieved in a few weeks, it is most successfully planned and delivered by teachers who know their students over the course of up to a year. We will respond swiftly when we receive the guidance and plan, as always, with all the students’ interests at heart.

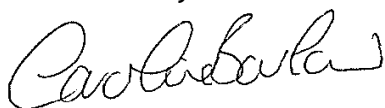
The INSET Day on the 26 June will be used to plan for the possible options that September may bring. No new work will be set on this day. Whilst we sincerely hope for a return to school for all in the new academic year, we will work on a range of options that may include reduced social distancing guidance but not yet full capacity and therefore a continuation of blended learning with online learning still playing a key feature. Staffing will still be dependent on the definition of vulnerable categories and we must plan with health and safety as a priority.

Whilst we clearly cannot hold our normal end of term celebratory events we will try to find ways in the last few weeks of July to mark the achievements of students who have shown their hard work, commitment and application over this term. Those who have excelled in their dedication to subjects in Year 11 and 13 and a celebration of our houses. Our College community ethos means a lot to staff and students and we must find ways to celebrate it even if we cannot do so physically together.

I will continue to update parents regularly and I will continue to attempt to be as open and transparent as possible, sharing our successes and potential changes as soon as I am able. Please be assured we will all continue to work as hard as we possibly can to consider all the different possibilities as we plan and adapt to the constantly changing environment.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher