

April 2021

Hi First Year students

I hope you are enjoying a good break over this Easter period. It's great to see the impact of the vaccination programme and I'm hoping we'll lose less days to isolation in this next term.

I'm writing to update you on a few things relating to how we will operate over this next term.

While things are clearly improving, the Government have set the review date for the wearing of facemasks on the 17th May – so until that date we will have to continue as we did before Easter with masks on all morning. To paraphrase line 237 in *Antigone* this is a message you don't want to hear and I don't want to give – but to use a more recent expression 'it is what it is', so we'll simply deal with it together.

After Easter

We will continue with the two long lessons in the mornings – unfortunately we are now at the stage where it's clear we won't be able to use our 'normal' timetable at all this year. Our normal is four 70 minute lesson per subject each week and from break time onwards the ability to go on and off site as desired. It's a real shame you haven't been able to experience the flexibility we offer our students as a Sixth Form College – but, all being well, your second year will have the normal freedom that should be part of a sixth form experience.

The final term then will have the long lessons we have become used to, check in will remain as notices sent out by email and the Friday tasks will continue to be the main focus on Fridays. All students that are not in timetabled support groups will take an enrichment course in cycle 3 and I'm delighted that many of these are now physical groups that will meet on campus in the afternoons.

As you already know we have consultation evening with your parents on either Wednesday 5th May or Thursday 6th May 4pm-7pm – these evenings will be an excellent opportunity to review your progress to date and plan for further improvement.

Talking about improvements - we have thoroughly reviewed our lecture-lunch arrangements and have decided to permanently move the lecture element into your group tutorial session. In terms of the shared meal together we have decided to make this an event we do three times a year rather than every week. We will charge a little more (£5) – but each event will be a fantastic time to celebrate together. **Our first 'big meal event' will be on the 27th May – which is also the date of our next charity day.** Of course the Mill Café is still open every day for take away food each break and lunchtime.

This next term is an important time to be thinking about September 2022 as it is only 16 months away and there are key decision to be thinking about and planning for. I know for most of you the route will be higher education and for most students this will be at prestigious Institutions that have competitive entry procedures (in line with our College specialism of Russell group, medicine and Oxbridge progression). **To help you and your families feel confident we are running a HE information evening on the 18th May.** I will be writing to students and families again specifically in regards to considering Oxbridge and Medical applications – if you don't get one of these letter but wish to receive one please see Jane Crawford (Medical) or Alex Fox (Oxbridge) for further information.

Assessment

I wrote some time ago as we went into lockdown to explain that we would not do high stakes key assessments in windows – rather we would enable you to focus in each subject learning and taking assessments in classrooms



without any of the heightened anxiety that can come with key assessment weeks. To support you we have not used three of our planned key assessment weeks – we now need to plan to give all students an opportunity to get a really excellent measure of their progress at the end of this academic year.

We will do end of year exams in all subjects during the week starting 14th June. Following these important assessments you will have YR1 to YR2 transition meetings with your progress tutors and be able to get exam feedback and summer tasks from your subject teachers. Of course most students will perform extremely well in these end of year examinations and want to progress with all their courses into year two – in the next few weeks I will be setting out the range of alternative options available so please don't worry if you have a dawning sense that you are not on the right programme for you – you'll be fully informed of the options available well before the end of the academic year.

Students need to be available for meetings up until the end of term on 15th July though we plan to end formal timetabled sessions with a mixed programme of events on the 30th June and 1st July.

Many thanks

Mark Rothery

Principal

