

Friday 24th April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Coronavirus Update

I am writing to you as we approach the end of our first week of the summer term. There is a great deal of speculation in the media about a potential reopening or partial reopening of schools, but it is only speculation at this stage and so does not impact upon our work as a school. We shall continue to set and accept work online to keep our students in Years 7 to 10 and Year 12 learning not only in terms of the knowledge and skills they should be learning, but also to keep them in the habit of learning.

In response to some feedback from parents of our younger students we will endeavour to set the work in more manageable amounts and thus more frequently rather than frontloading at the start of the week. We will continue to use our platform Show My Home Work for the purposes of our online learning with students in Years 7 to 10.

Families with Year 12 students are advised that we shall also ensure that *all* work set for them will be through Show My Home Work. I know that some colleagues are using other mediums such as Skype for Business and / or school emails, but from now on this will be in addition, not instead of using SMHW; in other words, all work will be set through SMHW across all year groups without exception.

In terms of the other mediums used with our older students such as virtual teaching I hope that you will appreciate that there is going to be a degree of variation in the amount of interaction between some teachers and students due to the personal circumstances of colleagues. Some colleagues are able to devote more time to virtual teaching than others; for example, some colleagues will have relatives and / or children to care for at this time. I ask that you to take this into account when considering all the efforts that colleagues are making currently and not compare like for like across subjects.

We are aware that some of our Year 12 students are undertaking paid work and so are in effect key workers as well as students. We recognise that this will mean for some students that they are not able to participate in some of their virtual lessons, if they are taking place for their subject(s). I do hope however that those Year 12 students concerned are able to balance their paid work along with their studies in order to mitigate against any long-term impact upon their learning.

A matter of concern for many families is our Activities Week and whether the trips and visits planned will go ahead considering the current national restrictions. Given the uncertainty of the national situation, I ask you to continue with the payment plan where possible whilst we await further information from the Government as to when and how current restrictions will be lifted. Please be assured that in the event of trips and visits being cancelled due to national restrictions still being in place, we will seek refunds for all monies paid for Activities Week.

Our work with Year 11 and Year 13 students is not over. We are no longer setting or accepting academic work from them, but we will be working with them to support them in their preparations for their next stage. The next stage may be preparation for undertaking courses in our Sixth Form or at college in the case of Year 11 students. We shall start setting summer term work for their potential A level and / or vocational courses, but in the full knowledge that a small number of students may wish to change courses when they receive their grades on 20th August. We will endeavour to be flexible with our Year 11 students to ensure that they are entirely happy with their course choices in September; indeed we will give them a period of time in September to change courses if they feel less than entirely suited to a course they have embarked upon. Our transition work with Year 11 will begin next week.

We will soon be engaging with our Year 13 students to provide advice, support and guidance to help them with their preparations for their next stage whether that be university, an apprenticeship or the world of work. I should like to reassure our Year 13 students and their families that our partnership has not ended, and our working relationship continues; it may be different, but it is not over.

I am able to provide an update on the Oriel community contribution to the Run5K4NHS. Our current total is £6351 donated by 581 participants which is a remarkable achievement and a credit to all concerned in supporting such a worthy cause.

I appreciate how unsettling these unusual and unprecedented times are for us all, but we shall prevail and as I have stated before, I am confident that in the future we will be able to look back with a sense of pride for the support that we have provided each other and for the support that we have displayed for our key workers and the NHS.

I remain grateful to you for your understanding and support at this time. I shall be in contact again next week, but in the meantime, I hope that you and your family are able to enjoy the weekend and that you all stay safe and well.

With my best wishes to you and your family

Philip Stack
Headteacher