

Wednesday 6th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Coronavirus Update

I hope that you and your family are keeping safe and well; as ever, I remain very grateful to you, your family and our students for managing the 'Stay Home' approach to this pandemic. I am extremely grateful to those families who have sent in emails of support and gratitude for the efforts that we are making to keep the learning going for our students, but also more widely to keep strong the sense of a connection between our school and our students. I have always held the view, and often express it to visitors to our school, that a school is not about the building, the facilities or the grounds, but about the people—from the youngest student in Year 7 to the oldest member of staff with our parents and governors supporting in the background. Our school community prevails because of our working partnership over many years and it will continue to prevail thanks to the understanding and support that we all aim to provide for each other. I greatly miss our school community being physically together in school, but I know that our school community is as strong as ever thanks to our great students, their families and our superb staff.

We expect some significant announcements to come from the Government on Sunday. There is much speculation about the immediate future in the media, but I shall leave such speculation to others and instead keep matters business as usual in these unusual circumstances. We continue with our online learning for our students in Years 7 to 10 and Year 12 and with our support for our students in Year 11 and Year 13 in terms of helping with their preparations for their next stage. As I have mentioned previously, we have entered into a partnership with Eton College for the benefit of our Year 11 and Year 13 students. Year 13 students can participate in an interactive programme called 'Making an Impact'; whilst our Year 11 students who have applied to our Sixth Form have been enrolled onto a programme that will enhance and develop their research skills. I remind families that any Year 11 student that has not applied to our Sixth Form can also participate in this programme by contacting our Assistant Headteacher, Mrs Denman, through her email:

cdenman@oriel.w-sussex.sch.uk

Following the Government's lockdown announcement on Wednesday 18th March we contacted both venues to rearrange our Year 11 Prom and Sixth Form Ball from their original dates in June to September. Some of our Year 11 and Year 13 students are understandably concerned however that our Year 11 Prom and Sixth Form Ball may or may not go ahead in September given that social venues such as pubs are said to be the last venues to be allowed to go back to normal. If these events go ahead, then all well and good, but if they cannot happen in September due to some restrictions still being in place, we will rearrange them again. I would look for a date later in the autumn term for our Year 11 Prom, around late October / November in order for it to happen before the busy festive season.

For our Sixth Form Ball, I would seek a date in early January so that the event is after the Christmas and New Year celebrations, but before our Year 13 students at university go back to continue their studies. Both events are very important to our school community and as I said to our students in Year 11 and Year 13 in the last days before school closure, these events will happen 'come hell or high water'!

I hope that you are encouraging your family members and our students to continue to be active by taking part in the Virtual Sussex Schools Games 2020 competition supported by Specsavers. We were delighted to have the highest number of participants taking part across the seven Crawley secondary schools in week one of the competition for which we are very grateful and would like to see even more of our students and families taking part and submitting their scores at www.sussexschoolgames.co.uk for this week's tennis challenges. Please check our website and Show My Homework every Monday to find out about the sporting challenges for that week and help us ensure that Team Oriel are the champions at the end of this competition.

On the sporting theme, I am delighted to be able to share with you the achievements of one of our Year 11 students, Alfie Penfold. Alfie has around 5% sight, but that has not stopped him from striving hard in his studies or in his chosen sport of swimming. He started swimming lessons at age 7 and has worked hard since then to take part in club galas, Para Nationals and Sussex County Championships. Alfie frequently takes part in the BBS National Youth Swimming Gala and this year he won 3 gold and 2 silver medals. Alfie has been invited by Swim England Para-Swimming to attend their Foundation Camp; a remarkable achievement by a remarkable young man.

Once again, I am very grateful to our staff for the work that they are doing to keep the learning active and positive for our students and very grateful to you for encouraging and supporting our students with their learning. I am very proud of the efforts that our staff and you, our families, have made and continue to make to ensure that our students still feel very much to be a part of our school community.

I hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and well.

With my best wishes to you and your family

Philip Stack
Headteacher