



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

Letter to pupils on Easter Saturday (in place of HM Beginning of Term Address Wednesday 15 April 2020)

11 April 2020

Dear Pupils,

There is no getting away from it: it does not feel right. In the larger sense, to live through a pandemic which has affected the daily lives of almost everyone across the world, is not something we anticipated nor do most of us have reserves of experience to draw upon. On every level, not least the psychological, Coronavirus has been disruptive. It defies the categories we can normally consign our fears into: it is everywhere but invisible; an enemy but unhateable; local but inescapable; certainly in the present yet making us uncertain about the future.

For all that, we know that it is beatable, we know that our nation and its services, our friends and our families have found ways to support us and to make sure that as few loved ones as possible are in harm's way. It will not be long before we can start to get back the control that characterised 'normal life', that we get back to the certainties (or appearance of them) that allows us all to feel like we have a place and purpose.

Quite soon the school will re-open, I expect in September though we are ready if the lockdown on schools is relaxed earlier than that. With the support of your parents, with you, and the staff who are having to work doubly hard both to pivot their courses towards remote learning and manage without a small but significant number of teachers 'furloughed' (that is temporarily off work to take advantage of the government scheme so we can afford the cut in fees), with this goodwill and support I know that we will be back to strength quickly, ready to provide an all-round education in a happy community for your generation of Eastbournians and those to come.

In the meantime, we will do our best to provide the resources and support you need to continue making excellent academic progress. For Year 11, that will mean focusing on five subjects most appropriate for your probable A-level choices and over the coming weeks introducing more specialised teaching to equip you with the skills required to thrive at A-level. There is every chance that you will be better prepared for sixth form than if you had instead been spending months practising exam technique and cramming for papers. For Year 13, we are developing courses of study to prepare you similarly for the next step – reorganising the departments into university-type faculties that best encompass the range of undergraduate courses you are moving on to. Teachers have been heroic in preparing the frameworks for Y11 and Y13 over the holiday and as staff return on Tuesday they can continue to build resources. The opportunity to develop your independent learning will, I am sure, serve you better in the next stage than sprinting for the GCSE or A-level line. As a year group you have a unique opportunity to take advantage of these unprecedented times. **We hope to be able to send you and your parents more details on the remote learning provision for all year groups by Bank Holiday Monday.**

I understand of course, that for you, your school life is built around a sense of progress towards goals and milestones. For those of you unsettled by the removal of summer examinations, remember that these were

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a ticket check on the journey of life. Yes, the train is rolling on and missing that station but they never were the destination, just a ticket barrier you no longer have to queue up for then rush through (remembering to take your ticket).

What will be required by Year 11 and Year 13 pupils especially, but by everyone, is a greater degree of active participation and self-motivation because you are learning at home. We have not designed a remote learning operation that requires your parents to stand over you and crack the whip. We will continue to monitor 'attendance' and work submitted from school and require you to keep to a solid rhythm of work under a weekly framework but with more freedom; we are trusting you too to want to keep busy and be productive, not least so your parents can turn more of their daily attention to their work and the undoubted challenges that this national event has brought to many people's working lives.

Beyond this most important golden rule: that we are asking for your cooperation and good intentions with remote learning, there are a few tips, conventions and rules we need to abide by to keep you safe and things harmonious over the coming term. For clarity, I have reproduced them at the end of the transcript of this talk. In summary, please:

- Keep to the same standards of good classroom behaviour and politeness when communicating with your peers and teachers remotely, use proper language when communicating electronically, for work go through school-designated platforms and abide by ICT policy, and certainly never engage in abusive or disruptive messaging.
- It is important, please, to be appropriately professional in your dress and location if you are on video to take part in a school activity but you do not need to wear school uniform.
- Take regular screen breaks during work times, and when you are not working try to take exercise, be outside or at least away from the computer. Otherwise, look after your mental health and physical wellbeing by keeping in touch with friends and sleeping, eating and drinking healthily. Remember please that your hsm and other caring professionals are still here for you and will want to check you are doing well and support you if you are in difficulty.

Additionally, we are at a very early stage of seeing what co-curricular activities we have the resource and ability to offer you remotely. We will certainly be looking at life skills, UCAS and career readiness, alongside where possible and appropriate, clubs, activities and hopefully some sport or exercise routines.

If this were a normal assembly, I would be letting you know the news as well as looking forward to the plans for the term. The plans, of course, have been dominated by the requirements of lockdown but we have one new teacher, Mrs Wood in Classics to cover Mrs Canning's maternity leave. We are also looking forward to having a Cornflower Ball, whenever that might be, to celebrate and bring back together our Year 13s. Over the holidays it was announced that Tawanda Muyeye is Wisden's Schools Cricketer of the Year. [This award](#), previously won by the likes of Joss Buttler and Jonny Bairstow, is extremely prestigious and the news was widely circulated on social media: the film of his batting was viewed 200 000 times (sixteen times more than any other promotional video made by the College)! Congratulations Tawanda.

Also, over the holidays, I want to call out a few superheroes that have gone beyond the call of duty in response to challenging times, noting that of course there are many more unnoticed or not mentioned who have been rallying around to ensure the College is ready for next term while contributing to the national cause. Dr Stewart with the College doctors and Senior Sister Pippa Prior have been invaluable, giving their free time as well as professional counsel, on the Critical Incident Team as we managed the medical risks of

the last weeks of terms and planned effectively for lockdown and beyond. Nick Chapman, Paul Lee, and Matt Allchorn have worked on the two campuses throughout the holidays as 'keyholders', supporting the provision at St Andrew's for children of key worker College parents, and generally doing the work of the many that would normally look after the site but cannot because they are isolated at home. Lauren Parfitt has coped with all College phone lines diverted to her home to provide seamless service and Adrian Ashby has worked through his holiday leave to update the Coronavirus page on the College website. Mr Clover and Colin Good in the Design and Technology department have been building personal protective equipment for NHS workers, and the College science department has donated goggles for the same purpose.

At this Easter time, it is natural to look to the story of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. We are in the place of the disciples at the moment of Jesus's death: disoriented, confused, scared, rudderless. But very quickly, Jesus appears to the women at the tomb, to the disciples, until they come to believe the resurrection and share in the glory of Pentecost.

So have faith, as we do in you, and believe that we will get through this. For we will overcome adversity, and we will be stronger, wiser, and more compassionate for it. I wish you a very Happy Easter and look forward with real hope for the coming summer term.

With very best wishes to you and your family,



TNM Lawson
Headmaster

Easter Saturday, 2020

Annexe - Safe remote learning - guide for pupils

1. Look after your mental health and well being

Remote learning ultimately means working alone and missing out on daily social interaction with your friends. If you ever feel frustrated, low or sad, it is important to discuss how you feel with your parents or your teacher or tutor or hsm. Keeping in touch with friends over the phone or social media can also help keep your spirits up. Remember the importance of common-sense strategies of eating healthily, drinking sufficient healthy fluids, getting sufficient sleep, avoiding screen-time before bed, taking regular exercise, etc.

2. Take regular screen breaks

See "my digital day" as an example of how we encourage you to take regular breaks and maintain a healthy structure to your day which should mirror, up to a point, how it works at school. Remote learning might be an exciting experience to begin with, but having prolonged periods in front of a screen is not always healthy. Remember to have regular screen breaks in your spare time; try to get fresh air, exercise and enjoy other (non-screen-based) activities.

3. School uniform

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For the duration of College closure, during school working days you may wear College uniform or sports kit, or appropriate, "professional / grown-up" home clothes in keeping with the College ethos. This means no baseball caps, cut away / cut-off / crop tops, no swim-wear, ripped clothes or clothing with offensive / inappropriate text / images, etc. All of this is common-sense.

4. Use classroom / "professional" language

When communicating through emails, online messages etc, do not use shorthand and "text-speak"; write as though you would speak in class. Remember to be respectful and polite and never post negative or abusive comments or "spam chat".

5. Treat remote learning the same as classroom learning

Despite being at home, it is important to remember the same rules apply as within the classroom, particularly regarding behaviour and conduct. Focus on learning and do not get distracted by your surroundings. Any breach of school rules and expectations will be challenged in accordance with normal school policies. Serious breaches, as usual, will be dealt with robustly and could involve outside agencies.

6. Always conduct video learning in an open / more public space at home

A bedroom is inappropriate unless there is a designated "study-desk / neutral area". It would be entirely inappropriate for a bed to be visible. Getting the right environment around you is appropriate for both you and the teachers you are working with. But you will also be more effective if the environment you set up, is conducive to learn in. You are encouraged to set up a designated area in your home which fulfils the need to be both appropriate and effective. Should you wish to use it, there is a background blurring function in the Teams app for laptops (but not tablets / phones).

7. Only communicate through approved school portals and platforms

Show my Homework and Microsoft Teams / Office 365 will be the main software platforms. Others such as Padlet, Project Q, Hegarty Maths, etc, you are also familiar with. Never use personal social media accounts to communicate with staff. This is all geared around ensuring you are safe and that your data is safe. Also, in the event of any problem emerging through your fault or someone else's, it allows the school to investigate the problem in a transparent way.

8. Stick to teacher rules and guidelines around online learning

The expectations encapsulated within the Code of Behaviour (for both pupils and staff), College Rules, ICT Acceptable Use Policy, etc as well as this policy document, form our common-sense expectations so that everyone can work in a safe and mutually supportive and kind environment. Remember you are in a learning environment and not a social setting.

9. Adhere to standard network / portal / platform security

As part of the Pupil ICT AUP, you already know the importance of never allowing other people access to your devices or networks / platforms which you are using by giving out or sharing passwords. Some work will be collaborative (eg Chats on MS Teams) but this is enabled through you accessing this functionality as being "you" and not as "someone else".

10. Do not use school platforms to discuss personal matters

It is extremely important that you keep your school communication channels separate to your own personal / social communication with friends or family. Never be tempted to engage in casual discussions or send images, videos or links via official school apps or personal apps which are not associated with your learning.

Note that certain elements of the school's work with you will be more pastoral and supportive in nature (eg weekly tutorials) but always remember to operate within these same common-sense boundaries. See point 10.

As always, if you experience problems at any time whether a small thing (eg. you are having trouble accessing or understanding taught material) to a more significant issue (eg. you are being bullied online), please get in touch with the school via your hsm or tutor (or teacher) without delay, as well as your parents (as necessary).

END