



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

4 March 2021

Dear Parents,

We are looking forward to the majority of pupils coming back on Monday (8 March). I hope your children are excited too, though we understand there will be some nervousness about the transition back and we have measures in place to support those who find the restart difficult or are carrying other burdens.

Overseas pupils

It also goes without saying that we will fully support any overseas pupils who cannot return to school for this two-week patch with remote learning and pastoral contact as well as helping them with arrangements for a safe return at the start of the summer term. Last night we received the excellent news that even pupils from 'red list' countries can return to quarantine at school from now on (the relevant guidance is here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966528/Boarding_school_students_from_red_list_countries_quarantine_arrangements.pdf).

GCSE and A-level

I promised to write this week about the plans unveiled about the replacements for GCSE and A-level exams. Somewhat frustratingly, the conclusion to the consultation was a further consultation by Ofqual on the final details so I cannot give you chapter and verse on the exact timeline of how grades will be assessed. If you have the stomach for getting into the nitty-gritty this further consultation is online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-general-qualifications-alternative-awarding-framework>

For brevity and reassurance I recommend that most people will find this one-page infographic more helpful:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964613/Infographic - how GCSEs AS and A levels will be awarded in summer 2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964613/Infographic_-_how_GCSEs_AS_and_A_levels_will_be_awarded_in_summer_2021.pdf)

We **do know** for sure that we will submit centre-assessed grades based on evidence that fairly represents your children's hard work. Important evidence will be work done under controlled conditions in the summer term, so your children will have plenty of time to prepare for any important test. If a subject has a Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) component, ie coursework, that will get credit as part of the grade. Work will be marked according to exam-board criteria and Ofqual will request samples from schools to ensure fair grading, so parents should feel reasonably confident that our pupils will not lose out because of the actions of other schools. We do not need to include any testing of work that your children have not covered so no-one will be disadvantaged by the challenging circumstances of the past year.

We have the opportunity over the coming two weeks to talk to your children about what is expected and reassure them as we develop a policy and timeline which will give them plenty of clarity on how to thrive. I will, of course, keep you fully informed.

continued

Testing and the return

A reminder that an additional pillar of our safe return is our very strong encouragement for all pupils to sign up to twice weekly testing on Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

In January we had excellent take-up on this from pupils and staff which helped keep those very few pupils with asymptomatic Covid from coming in and contributing to the spread of the virus. We see lateral flow testing as an important part of infection control in addition to all our other measures. Avoiding illness is a priority but so is the reduction in the interruption to education caused by self-isolation around confirmed cases. Thank you for getting your child to sign up to testing (please give permission on this form if you are among the handful of parents who have not already done so: [PUPIL - Covid testing consent form.](#))

Some details about sport

Please excuse the detail but this should aid in your planning. In these last two weeks of Lent term, we want the boys and girls to enjoy as much of our wonderful co-curriculum provision as possible. In games, Year 9 and 10 girls will play netball. We had intended the girls to be in possession of their new netball dresses but we will delay the introduction of that until next year and so girls can wear normal games kit to these sessions. Year 9 and 10 boys will play hockey and so should bring what they can – sticks, shin pads and mouthguards. All other years will do the games options that they chose in January. We intend to launch the junior activity programme for these last two weeks too and all pupils in Year 9 and 10 have been contacted to make their choices this week, prior to their return on Monday. Do please prompt them to do so if they have not already. We are also continuing with drama and music as well, albeit in line with our stringent Covid protocols.

As far as summer term sport is concerned, while it is uncertain if we will be able to play interschool fixtures, we are hopeful there will be some and so pupils should plan accordingly. PlayerLayer have cricket shirts and whites available on a five-day turnaround and they will be sending out a flyer for a discount on cricket midlayers. For athletics and tennis, the College shirts and shorts are the appropriate items of kit to wear.

We can't wait to have the pupils back – the heartbeat of the school.

With best wishes,

Tom Lawson
Headmaster

Cc staff; pupils

