



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

12 May 2021

Dear Parents,

It has been some time since I have written and I can now, at last, give you the good news that the liberalisation of some Covid rules from Monday 17 May will allow us to make some changes for the benefit of pupils. I also take the opportunity to keep you updated on other matters.

Face coverings

Pupils from Monday 17 May no longer need to wear face coverings in the classroom or in communal areas of the school and campus. They will need to continue wearing face coverings on school transport so I advise they do keep one in their pocket for this reason or if they need to pop to the shop and suchlike. For your information, staff and visitors still need to wear face coverings in indoor communal areas.

Welcoming parents

We would be delighted to welcome parents back to watch home outdoor fixtures. Indoor socialising and the provision of match teas is unfortunately not yet possible. At the moment it appears that other schools are not allowing parents so unless you hear firmly to the contrary you will not be able to spectate at away fixtures.

In the spirit of bringing parents back into the school where appropriate, I am delighted to inform Year 9 parents that we plan to operate the GCSE options morning in person for those who can attend between 10:30am and 12:00pm on Saturday 22 May. The Deputy Head (Academic) will be writing to Year 9 families with more information later this week. Please do also check the Second Master's email to all parents sent on 5 May to remind yourself about Speech Day and the arrangements for the rest of the term.

Optional extra-mural week for Year 11 and 13

We are creating opportunities for Year 11 and 13 pupils to participate in some different activities in the week commencing 14th June (after half term). These are optional and aim to give those pupils who wish to a chance to catch up on missed opportunities or try something new. The Deputy Head (Co-Curricular) will write to parents and pupils in the next few weeks to give more details.

Other measures remain

We will look to return to normal as much as we can over the coming weeks and particularly at the next step in the roadmap, 21 June. Aside from the relaxation of the face covering requirement the guidance for schools is largely unchanged which means that aspects of social distancing, enhanced cleaning, and attention to hygiene will be maintained. We would be very grateful if parents could ensure pupils maintain the regime of lateral flow testing twice per week for a little while longer.

GCSE and A-level

We are acutely aware of the stress that 'exam' season brings pupils particularly in Year 11 and 13. Facing a different and much more trying system for allocating grades than last year, pupils have a few busy weeks of short but frequent assessed work.

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I have explained to the pupils the reason why this is preferable for the majority of them to big high-stakes exams. Relying on past markbook averages could reduce their grades by as much as 20 per cent compared to last year because we are not now allowed to award marks based on a 'flight path' of expected improvement. No system fits the preference of every pupil, and please be reassured that I am sympathetic to the strain these assessments place on our pupils. The plan we have executed is to support them getting the best possible grades under the system imposed this year.

It has been delightful seeing the pupils enjoy the sunshine and the return of nearly-normal school. Thank you so much for your patience with the restrictions of these last 14 months and I am sure you will join me in celebrating the increasing freedoms that are so important to the children's wellbeing, friendships and success.

With best wishes,



Tom Lawson
Headmaster

Cc staff; pupils