

15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Now that we are at the end of the first full week of the Spring Term, I am hopeful that all students have settled into a good routine and are engaging effectively in remote learning activities. Our aim this term is to continue with as many of our school activities as possible, albeit that most activities will be conducted remotely.

My assembly, at the beginning of the week, focused on one of our values, Aspiration. One of the key messages was that it is important that the pandemic does not have a significant impact on either the aspirations or expectations of our students. For some students, this will not be easy. The pandemic has created a great deal of uncertainty for many children and their families and has now lasted for a significant period of their lives.

There are a number of excellent online resources that are available to young people to support them through this phase. However, I would recommend books such as *'Dare to Be You'* by Matthew Syed as an excellent read for any child or young adult, but particularly for those who may need some additional tools and emotional support at any time and particularly at times that are emotionally challenging.

I have been pleased this week that Ofsted has published a guide for schools entitled 'What works well in remote learning'. The full version of this guide can be found [\[here\]](#). Regardless of differing views about Ofsted that may exist, one of the strengths of the organisation is its' ability to review and summarise good practice that is taking place in schools. This guide has been particularly helpful in that it challenges the myths that exist with regard to remote learning and give examples of excellent practice.

One such myth that has been dispelled is that 'live lessons' are the gold standard for remote learning. This is not to say that we are critical of schools that have taken a 100% live lesson approach. I am sure that parents and carers are aware that we have taken a blended approach to remote learning, which aims to use the most appropriate format for each lesson within each learning cycle. However, we do believe that live content is extremely valuable, for example, when checking understanding, debating, etc.

I would encourage all parents and carers to visit our [Remote Learning page](#) on our website as this gives a detailed overview of the approach, our protocol for 'live lessons' as well as providing tips for both parents and students. We will continue to develop the page throughout the term as appropriate and I will highlight any significant changes via my newsletter.

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**Mr Gary Mullings BA (Hons)**  
Headteacher

I would like to thank the team of staff, led by Assistant Headteacher, Mr Cahill and Business Manager, Miss Williams who have successfully conducted in excess of 150 lateral flow tests for students and staff who have been onsite in the past week. The professionalism and attention to detail demonstrated by the team has meant that the initial phase of this project has been a success and that if the time comes, we will be able to scale up the operation for the entire school community.

Finally this week, I was hopeful that I would be in a position to provide a significant update for parents and carers of students in Years 11 and 13 with regards to GCSE and A-level outcomes for this year. Unfortunately, the situation remains unclear. However, the Secretary of State did write to the Chief Regulator at Ofqual this week indicating that teacher assessment will be the most likely method of deciding grades and also asked Ofqual to investigate whether some form of externally set tasks or papers could be included (i.e. mini exams).

The full letter from the Secretary of State can be found [\[here\]](#). Once a pathway has been generated for this process, there will be a consultation with schools. The aim is clearly to achieve this in a timely manner and to do so without creating further unnecessary burdens on students, families or schools. I will ensure that parents and carers are kept up to date. In the meantime, we will be sharing trial examination results with students and parents in the coming weeks and will also be initiating our Year 11 interview process to support their learning and post-16 progression.

Have a peaceful weekend.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Mullings', written in a cursive style.

**Gary Mullings**  
**Headteacher**