



From the Headmaster - 1 June 2020

I hope you are well and managed to enjoy the lovely weather over what would have been the half-term break. The start of a new month provides an opportunity to pause and take stock, and we should all take a moment to consider just how much we have achieved over the last 10 weeks or so; finding new ways of working, learning and staying in touch with our family and friends. Initially our lives may have been thrown in to chaos, and we still very much find ourselves in a time of uncertainty, but we must not lose sight of the untold stories that cannot be predicted, evaluated, assessed, and made into data points, but that do define the best ways in which we have coped with this unprecedented situation. I would ask everyone to hold on to that thought as we go forward.

Face-to-face sessions for Year 10 and Year 12

Since I wrote to you on 22 May, the Government has issued further detail on how schools should approach the 'face-to-face support' for Year 10 and Year 12 students. Indeed, one Headteacher has suggested that school leaders have received no fewer than 40 different pieces of guidance in the last fortnight. I think it may be more!

Whilst we now know that we are only able to have 25% of a year group in school on any one day and that we cannot start to offer face-to-face support until Monday 15th June, fortunately, most of our planning is still relevant.

A reminder that no one should feel under any pressure to put themselves at risk and it is completely acceptable for individuals to decide that they are unable to work on site. However, based on the evidence we have, including the recent scientific advice published to teachers' unions last week, together with the detailed risk assessments we have carried out, we do believe that the face-to-face opportunities we hope to offer will ensure the safety of pupils and staff.

We also appreciate that travel will be impossible for some and therefore Show My Homework now called 'Satchel One' (SMHW) will continue to be the primary way of delivering the curriculum supplemented by some Microsoft Teams sessions.

At the moment, it is likely that each student in Year 12 will have the opportunity to come into school for one shortened day during the week beginning the 15 June to benefit from small group sessions from subject specialists and Year 10 will have a similar opportunity the week beginning the 22 June. This pattern will then be repeated until the end of term.

Mr O'Neill and Mr Tilley will be writing to pupils and parents of pupils in Years 12 and 10 respectively later this week with detailed plans about the face-to-face sessions outlining what each student can expect including the number and length of any student periods in school, student group sizes, timings and other key information.

Remote learning and further use of Microsoft Teams

You may remember from my last email, that I said that after half-term, we will roll out the use of 'Teams' for pupils in Key Stage 3 and Year 10 following the successful trial of Teams lessons in Year 12. Many thanks to parents of pupils in Years 7-10 who have accessed their Parent Gateway accounts to give their consent for their son to take part in these online sessions. We hope that this arrangement will supplement and enrich the work set on SMHW which will remain our primary means of provision during this time.

The Instructions for Parents are:

- Login to your Parent Gateway account here: <https://parentgateway2.strschool.co.uk>
- Click 'My Information' on the main screen
- Click 'Your Students', then the student you'd like to enable Teams for
- Find the 'Parental Consent' section and click 'Allow student to take part in Microsoft Teams sessions'
- Repeat this process for any other children as required

We know that for some students (and their parents) the use of SMHW is far from ideal and for others, particularly those who have to share tablets, laptops and home computers, the use of Teams is also problematic. We also know that this unprecedented situation is causing a great deal of turmoil for parents and teachers. We will continue to keep our arrangements under constant review and endeavour to act in the very best interests of all members of the school community, but it is clear that we continue to have to make some difficult choices underpinned by practicality and equity. Nevertheless, we all have a role to play in making the arrangements work as well as they possibly can, given the circumstances.

If you require more support in supporting your child's learning at home, please do get in touch with the Head of Year:

- Year 7 Mrs J Robinson: jrr@strs.org.uk
- Year 8 Mr Z Hinds: zfh@strs.org.uk
- Year 9 Mr N O'Neil: no@strs.org.uk
- Year 12 Mr B O'Neill: bjo@strs.org.uk

- Year 10 Mr D Tilley: dpt@strs.org.uk
- Year 11 Mr N Stewart: njs@strs.org.uk
- Year 13 Miss E Jauncey: elj@strs.org.uk

Alternatively, you are welcome to contact the Head of Key Stage:

- Head of Key Stage 3: Rhys Davies rmd@strs.org.uk
- Head of Upper School: Peter Daniell pmd@strs.org.uk
- Head of Sixth Form: Matthew Lynch mtl@strs.org.uk

Virtual Open Days

I'm pleased to announce that later this month we will be running three 'Virtual' Open Days for prospective pupils and their parents on 23, 24 and 25 June – sign up details will be available on the home page of our website at strschool.co.uk later this week. The sessions will include a live introduction, a virtual tour and a live Q&A session with me, Mr Rhys Davies, Head of Key Stage 3, and Mrs Jenny Robinson, Head of Year 7. If you do have any friends or family members who are interested in finding out more about Year 7 entry to Sir Thomas Rich's, I would be most grateful if you could pass on this information.

It is tempting to frame the current public health crisis in terms of the Second World War, and to talk of fighting battles, claiming victories and overcoming a common enemy. However, I think we all know that, in reality, Covid-19 will be with us until a vaccine can be formulated or an effective treatment discovered, and we will all need to practise social distancing and follow other measures for some time to come. In the meantime, as a School community we will continue to respond to guidance as we receive it, with the very best interests of the students and staff and other members of Sir Thomas Rich's at the heart of everything we do. To quote Abraham Lincoln, "Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm". As always, thank you for your continued support.

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