



From the Headmaster - 1 July 2020

You may have seen that the 'return to school' plans for September, set to be announced by the Government later this week, have already been published by a number of media outlets. The draft documents suggest that, rather than relying completely on social distancing, the aim is to limit the points at which the infection could be spread by keeping pupils in separate, isolated year groups throughout the school day. Year groups would have their own breaks and lunchtimes, and the start and end times may well be different for different year groups too.

Whilst I can understand that parents need to know what the school will look like in September as soon as possible, I believe it would be inappropriate to release any of our planning at this stage without having a chance to scrutinise the guidance when it comes out in full and final form.

I would like to emphasise once again that at Sir Thomas Rich's, our primary concern will always be the health, safety and well-being of our pupils, staff and other members of the school community. As a state school, we are obliged to follow the statutory advice and guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England. The challenge for us will be to meet the DfE's requirements while prioritising the needs and well-being of the school community, a challenge which I am confident we can meet with a blend of pragmatism, patience and good humour.

I will, of course, update you further once the new guidance has been officially released. In the meantime, I can outline the arrangements in place at the school until the end of this term, Friday 17 July.

Face-to-face sessions

Following extremely positive feedback from both staff and students regarding the Year 10 and 12 face-to-face sessions, it seems sensible to offer further face-to-face time to our examination classes before the end of term. The sessions have provided a much needed opportunity for a catch up with students, helping to boost their knowledge and understanding and increase their confidence and promote well-being. The sessions are also easing the burden on staff for setting and chasing work remotely.

If we can arrange further in-school sessions for our Year 10 and 12 students before the summer break, it will undoubtedly help to bridge the gap between now and September. We are currently working on plans and you will receive more details on this from Key Stage Teams shortly.

Arrangements for pupils not coming in to school

Work will be set for pupils in all years via Satchel One until 17 July. I have reminded subject teachers to, where possible, set work for all their classes, lesson by lesson, so pupils are able to follow their usual school timetable. Pupils may ask questions and communicate with their teachers about their work either using Satchel One or email. Pupils (and parents) are also welcome to contact their Form Tutor and Head of Year.

Teams

Teams sessions in Key Stage 3, Year 10 and Year 12 are continuing apace. Teachers are working hard to plan these sessions carefully so that they supplement and enrich the work set on Satchel One and so that pupils are able to interact with their peers as well as their teacher to consolidate their learning. Whilst attendance at these sessions is not compulsory, teachers have been impressed and encouraged by the very positive response from pupils in terms of their participation and by the way in which they have conducted themselves online so that everyone can adapt to and benefit from this new way of learning. All Teams timetables as well as guidance for pupils using Teams are available on SharePoint.

End of Term Key Stage Assemblies

Each Key Stage will host a virtual Awards Assembly in the last week of term. Further details will be published nearer the time.

Reports for Years 8 and 9

Year 8 and 9 reports follow a different format this year, and will be published during the last week of term. If you wish to discuss the report, please contact your son's Form Tutor or Head of Year in the first instance.

Sports evening

Nick O'Neil is planning a remote sporting event for students this year and will publish further details in the next few days.

Summer concert

Pauline Jones is planning a virtual event in place of our usual summer concert and is contacting the pupils involved. More details to be announced shortly.

Mental health and well-being

We continue to live through challenging times and you may feel your family needs some additional well-being support.

CAMHS

Tel 01452 894300 (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday).

NHS helpline for children, young people and families who may require support and advice.

The Tic+

The TIC+ website also offers several pathways of support:

<https://ticplus.org.uk>.

Tel: 01594 372777.

Text: 07520 634063.

Instagram

We now have a school Instagram account, please do follow us for the latest news about the school:

www.instagram.com/sirthomasrichs.

I will be in touch again after the full Government guidance on returning to school is released. In the meantime, my sincere thanks once again to the entire school community for working so patiently and steadfastly through this difficult period. To quote Virgil: "Come what may, all bad fortune is to be conquered by endurance."

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