



From the Headmaster - 17 July 2020

As the summer term comes to a close today, I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone in the School community for their efforts over the last few months. It is hard to try to capture this period accurately, but John Lennon's iconic phrase that "life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" does seem particularly apt. At the start of the academic year, we had no idea that a pandemic would affect our working, personal and school lives so utterly and completely, and 'derail' so many of our calendar staples; from external examinations to sporting fixtures, trips and performances. I am aware of just how difficult this time has been for so many of us in so many different ways but our ability to navigate this uncharted territory together, as a school community, is testament to our collective strength, resilience and tenacity.

September plans

Planning for September continues to progress and I can confirm that we will be putting in place a staggered start to the School year:

Thursday 3 September – Years 7 and 12 only

Friday 4 September – Years 7, 9, 10 and 12 only

Monday 7 September – all pupils

We need to do this in order to have a sharp focus on learning new routines, practising social distancing where applicable and ensuring the safety of all students and staff.

The start and finish times of the School day will also be changing:

Year 7 Start: 8:40 Finish: 15:10

Year 8 Start: 8:30 Finish: 15:20

Year 9 Start: 8:20 Finish: 15:30

Year 10 Start: 8:40 Finish: 15:20

Year 11 Start: 8:30 Finish: 15:10

Year 12 Start: 8:40 Finish: 15:20

Year 13 Start: 8:30 Finish: 15:10

However, whilst we do need to have staggered start and finish times, we recognise that many students travel to school on coaches. Although we will implement these start and finish times to reduce mixing and preserve the 'bubbles' on site, pupils will be able to come in to School as soon as their coach arrives, but they will need to go straight to their allocated area. We will, of course make sure all pupils are able to catch their coaches home.

We will endeavour to keep you informed as our plans evolve; specifically, we will be formally reviewing our plans on 12 August, following confirmation of the Department for Education's advice on 11 August. Updated protocols for staff, students and parents will follow, as will updates to all of our risk assessments and risk assessment action planning. We are still working on the details of the school timetable, but it is likely to be published soon after 12 August too. Please be assured that the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils is at the forefront of our planning.

Face coverings

I have a number of enquiries about face coverings in school. The Department for Education tells us that its guidance around face coverings has not changed – that is, they are not expected to be worn by pupils or staff in school. However, should any member or staff or pupil choose to wear a face covering in school, they will be able to do so.

End of term celebrations

This week we have seen some great initiatives from staff and students, from the Key Stage colours assemblies, to the virtual summer concert compiled by the Music Department and the virtual sports' event hosted by the PE Department. Well done to all involved.

If you missed it, you can view our summer concert on the School website here:

<https://strschool.co.uk/news/Virtual-Summer-Concert/7ae7f4da-0c1b-425c-986b-f12ce7a9a33b>.

Please do check out @sirthomasrichspe on Instagram as well for all the sports' day challenges, results and videos:

<https://www.instagram.com/sirthomasrichspe>.

We were also very proud to be involved with the G15 Virtual Celebration of Success this week – two videos hosted over two nights on Chosen Hill School's YouTube channel. Every year students from across the G15 group of Gloucester secondary schools come together to put on a celebration of music and art at Gloucester Cathedral – this year of course it has not been possible to stage the live event, but the virtual alternative is well worth viewing and it is great to see Gloucester schools finding another way of collaborating so creatively during this time. You can watch the

'Head High, Heart Strong' videos online here: www.youtube.com/channel/UCoYkA1I-yPiA40s2u9_KVSA/featured. Rich's students Ellie Jones (violin), Jess Slade (cello) and Hugh Clist Woodward (piano) perform the Scherzo from Oscar Fuchs' Piano Trio No1 Op 29 at around 14 minutes 40 seconds into the film. A lovely performance and well worth viewing.

Website news and social media

You may also like to take a look at the news on the School website and on our Instagram account; a lot of positive work has been going on in School and at home throughout lockdown, and there is a great deal of which to be proud:

School news: <https://strschool.co.uk/news/archive>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sirthomasrichs>

If your sons or daughters have completed any work or activities in lockdown that they would like to share with the School community via our social media channels, you can contact Sara Vielvoye at the School with details on sjv@strs.org.uk.

Year 11 and 13 Results

The current situation continues to present a number of challenges regarding how schools can issue results safely to students. Mr Daniell and Mr Lynch have already been in contact with Year 11 and Year 13 students and their parents to outline our plans to enable everyone to access their GCSE and A Level grades as easily and as quickly possible on the morning of the results' days, with staff available to support students should they require it. A Level results will be published on Thursday 13 August and GCSE results on Thursday 20 August. Staff will be in touch again nearer the time to make certain that students are fully aware of the arrangements.

Year 8 and 9 Reports

Reports for Year 8 and Year 9 are now available on Parent Gateway. As usual, please contact the Head of Year if you have any concerns in the first instance. However, please do not expect an immediate reply as a considerable number of staff will take a break over the next two weeks.

Year 7 and 12 Induction

The last two weeks of term have seen induction sessions for students joining us in September, and it has been good to meet our new Year 7 and prospective Year 12 students – albeit in a somewhat altered format! On Tuesday this week, we hosted a live, online Question and Answer session for our Year 12 applicants, with Head of Sixth Form Mr Lynch, Head of Year 12, Miss Jauncey and myself. It was very different from our usual face-to-face induction days of course, but we do hope that, along with the link to the induction film we sent out to all applicants, the session served to answer everyone's questions, and we very much look forward to meeting our new Year 12s in September. In addition, we welcomed a number of our incoming Year 7 students in School last week – following strict social distancing and hygiene measures of course. A few of the pupils either had not visited us at all, or had attended an 'open day' some months or even a year ago, so it was a great opportunity for them to familiarise themselves with the School and to meet some of their teachers including Head of Year 7, Mrs Robinson and Head of Key Stage 3, Mr Davies. We look forward to seeing them all again in September.

Thank you to staff

Of course, at the end of the summer term, we always like to say thank you to staff who are leaving us and on Wednesday a small number gathered in the school hall to bid a fond farewell to Mrs Bennett, Mr Flattery, Mrs Kellaway and Mr Gallagher. Other staff members watched via Teams. I want to pay particular tribute to Joe Gallagher for 39 years of dedicated service to the School. We shall miss Joe's dry sense of humour, his quiet steadfastness and his kindness and loyalty to his pupils and colleagues. Joe spoke of being a cog in a machine; how each one of us makes a vital contribution to ensure that the machine works reminding us of the importance of a shared sense of purpose and the need to work together and take care of each other. But, I should like to end this rather too long email with the quote used by Mrs Roche, Head of English, during her farewell speech to Mrs Bennett. It is from Jane Eyre and echoes Joe's words and indeed my sentiment at the beginning of this email:

"there is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow-creatures, and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort".

A message that will no doubt resonate having used all of our collective might to reach the end of this particular academic year. I wish you the very best for the summer break and I will be in touch again after the DfE guidance is published in August; I look forward to seeing everyone in the autumn.

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