



## From the Headmaster - 4 December 2020

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Dear Parents

One of the hardest things since March has been the lack of opportunity to meet face to face with colleagues as a team. During our two INSET days last week and this week, we managed to stay connected via Teams and YouTube due to the brilliant work of our IT Manager Matt Hopton and the IT Team. It's not quite the same experience as speaking with all colleagues in the hall, but it was as close as we could get and I am indebted to the IT Team for all their hard work this term ensuring staff and students are able to communicate effectively. I also must acknowledge the committed and industrious Parents' Association for helping to buy some of the extra equipment we have required to work more remotely (even when we are all in school!). I believe some virtual quiz tickets are still available for this evening at <https://www.strspa.co.uk/>

I am not sure whether or not it is a common feeling, but every time I watch films with crowd scenes, or footage of sporting events that took place before March 2020, I'm compelled to shout at the television: "You're all too close together! Step back, move away!" In a school context, at the moment, there are few opportunities for staff and students to meet and work together – in particular I miss having everyone present in the hall during whole school assemblies and I look forward to a time when they can resume. However, while some school events will not take place in their usual format, we continue to endeavour to uphold our traditions. Indeed, the use of technology has allowed members of our wider school community to take part in events such as Speech Night and our act of remembrance, so that perhaps is one small silver lining.

### **Tier 2 Restrictions**

With news this week that the Pfizer vaccine has been approved and rollout will start as early as next week, there is at last an end in sight to the restrictions under which we have been living. Of course, Gloucestershire remains in Tier 2 classification, news which has been met with a mixed response, but I would urge families to continue to practise as much social distancing as possible as we approach the end of term. The Department for Education has made it clear that schools must not finish a week early for Christmas, so we have to do all we can to avoid an increase in cases in the last week of term, causing pupils to have to self-isolate over the holiday.

To confirm, term will end as planned between 12.45pm and 1pm on Friday 18 December. The finish times will be staggered in keeping with our new normal:

Year 7 - 13:00  
Year 8 - 12:55  
Year 9 - 12:50  
Year 10 - 13:00  
Year 11 - 12:50  
Year 12 - 12:55  
Year 13 - 12:50

### **Year 11 Trial Exams**

Students in Year 11 have just completed their trial exams, and I would like to congratulate them all on their maturity and good conduct in what must have been a stressful time for them. I am sure all their hard work and determination will pay off. My thanks also to our hardworking team of internal examinations staff, led by Jo Tyler, ably supported by our invigilators.

### **Government announcements regarding Year 11 and Year 13 external examinations**

The Department for Education has this week said that in recognition of the challenges faced by students this year, grades will be more generous, students will be given advance notice of some topic areas, and steps will be taken to ensure every student receives a grade, even if they miss a paper due to self-isolation or illness. The new measures include:

- grading in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged;
- students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision;
- exam aids - like formula sheets - provided in some exams giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise;
- additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation;

Whilst we haven't been given the exact details of these measures, it is important to emphasise that the best way to secure future success is by consistently working hard and responding to feedback so misconceptions and areas of weakness can be addressed. We are, of course, committed to doing all we can to help pupils maximise their potential and a reminder that our [Learning and Teaching update](#) outlines the approach we are taking this term.

## Creative Success

The creative life of the school continues to flourish, and it was good to see so many students entering the House Art Competition in November, as well as the Drama Department's 'One Minute Monologue' competition. The monologue winners were Jack Williams 7B, Tate Franz 8R and Jack Parrott 9S, and you can see clips from their dramatic renditions on our social media channels. Both their choice of texts and performances were impressive.

I am also pleased to announce that the runaway winner of the House Art Competition, which took place in November, is Northgate. The results were:

1st place: Northgate, 130 points  
2nd place: Southgate, 40 points  
3rd place: Eastgate, 35 points  
4th place: Westgate, 30 points

The first place winners in each year group are as follows; do see the school website later this week for the full list and some of the successful artworks.

Year 7: Frederick Engelke, 7S, Northgate  
Year 8: Alexander Taylor, 8R, Northgate  
Year 9: Toby Sherringham, 9C, Northgate  
Year 10: Paddy Chavasse, 10S, Northgate  
Year 11: Samuel Silmon-Clyde, 11R, Eastgate  
Year 12/13: Mary Ramos, 13T, Westgate

## Finally

In a month that is usually busy, even frenetic, with shopping, pantomimes, events and parties, perhaps now is a good time to appreciate home comforts and enjoy the simple pleasures of staying at home with a good book or watching a film on the television. Although we will not have our annual Christmas Carol services, Head of Music, Pauline Jones is currently busy rehearsing with students by Zoom in preparation for the virtual music concert and I hope many students and their families will join us for what will no doubt be an enjoyable and festive end to the term.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Morgan  
HEADMASTER

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