



Re-founded 1555

Ripon Grammar School

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From the Headmaster

23 April 2020

Dear Parents

I hope you have all had a happy and healthy Easter break. We continue to find ourselves in very strange circumstances at the start of a new term, when normally we'd be looking forward to the examination season, trips such as Beverley Park and Normandy, the sounds of leather on willow, and the simple delights of spending time with friends sat on the grass surrounded by the beauty of the playing fields. Still, we live in hope that we may yet return perhaps by half term.

Hardest for many of us has been the absence of those important daily interactions between staff and students. With the Year 13 having now officially left, I don't even have the privilege of virtual contact via Teams with my own teaching group. But though the current lock down has inevitably been very difficult for many – financially, socially and perhaps familiarly – many of us have been lucky enough to have enjoyed the opportunity of time with family and even get fit. Certainly the number of people out walking, cycling and running seems to have increased exponentially and the dearth of flour in the shops suggests home baking might be triumphing over convenience food.

I do hope students have been able to keep up to date with their work commitments and have not felt too isolated from school friends. Do please continue to report any problems if they occur to pastoral heads and tutors. Certainly anecdotal reports to me suggest that the school has done as much as it can to provide a meaningful working environment and for that I would like to thank the positive words given and the effective planning and setting of work by the teaching staff.

It is essential I think to re-emphasise the message that we will all recover from this crisis and that students particularly should not over-worry about getting behind with aspects of their work. There is a necessary balance to be struck here and we do

Headmaster: Mr. Jonathan M. Webb, MA (Cantab).

Address: Clotherholme Road, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 2DG Telephone: (01765) 602647 Facsimile: (01765) 606388

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know that online work can be difficult to manage. For this reason, we will have a reading week for Years 7-9 in two weeks' time which will hopefully balance some ongoing subject work with more extended reading exercises. In addition, I would like to emphasise that further to the briefing update yesterday which mentioned a possible exam week after half term, that this is yet to be confirmed, that students should not start to worry about revising, and we would, of course, structure in a week before hand to support revision. Any assessment would be to highlight any gaps in knowledge and inform progress and could not possibly replicate a formal assessment after a normal term's work.

I would now like to use this opportunity to inform you about a couple of changes which will be in place when we return in September.

During the lock down we have been able to complete several important staff appointments. In May we will be saying goodbye, possibly, and sadly, not in person, to Ms Sutcliffe in the Mathematics department and Mrs Etherington as SENCO. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for their dedicated and caring service while they have worked at the school. In their place we have appointed Mr David Hamill as a teacher of Mathematics who joins us from Dr Challoner's Grammar School. Mrs Belinda Roy will join us as SENCO and will also be teaching Psychology, covering for Mrs Judd's maternity leave. Mrs Roy is currently SENCO at Huddersfield Grammar School. Finally we have also appointed Mr Ranjeet Shahi [Old Riponian] as the school's Health Worker. Mr Shahi joined us as a supply health worker during March and so much enjoyed his time at his old school that he wanted to work here! He will qualify as a nurse in October.

In September we will also have a new management company overseeing our catering services. CH&Co were selected from a rigorous tendering process and we very much look forward to them building on the current high standards of catering. As part of the new contract there will be some investment in the dining hall serving area and a new 'food hub' in the sixth form center [hopefully completed by September]. I do hope that cosmetic changes in food delivery will also be supported by an excellent and augmented choice of fresh and exciting food options for both day and boarding students.

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Finally, you may be aware following our consultation earlier this year with staff, parents and students that we have been reviewing the school's uniform policy. Based on a fairly unanimous and closely aligned response from all three parties, the school's management put a set of proposals to governors which were accepted. The traditional elements of the school uniform will be retained [ties, shirts, summer dress, skirts etc.]. However, from September, the boys' and girls' uniform list will be combined into a single uniform list from which all students can choose. Trousers and skirts will remain of an approved style only. In addition, we will be introducing a single new jumper which will be blue and crested. This item will remain optional, as before, but we will allow boys who have the old-style grey jumpers to continue to wear them for a year. Finally, with regards to standards of dress, we will be looking closely at ensuring that the rules concerning uniform are fully enforced as it would seem apparent that in recent times standards have been slipping a little. The full uniform list and uniform regulations will be published shortly on the website.

I do hope that when I next write I can do so at my desk in school with the sounds of teaching in the background. In the meantime, I can only be heartened by the warm messages of support from parents as we continue to cope with the ongoing national emergency.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan M Webb
Headmaster

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