



The Matthew Arnold School

Part of the Bourne Education Trust



6th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Spring home learning

It is certainly a measure of how the coronavirus has taken over society at every level that we are beginning to talk in terms of anniversaries - it was a year ago yesterday that the first reports of a new cluster of deaths attributable to an unidentified virus in Wuhan, China were reported in the UK. Writing this letter take me back to the first school closures in March and my initial communications with parents then.

Whilst I am desperately disappointed that schools have had to close for most pupils, I know it is the right decision, and only regret that it was not taken earlier to allow us all time to make plans. The time spent by so many people over the holiday break on now redundant plans, particularly regarding the rapid testing programme, is frustrating, to put it mildly.

Before I detail what you can expect in terms of educational provision for the next few weeks, I want to take the time to express my sympathy to all families who have experienced loss or disruption. None of us should underestimate the emotional toll that this is having and although we have heard the same message time and again, we must look after each other - as families, as friends and as communities.

Home learning

- Students will receive their education through the Microsoft Teams platform, which they have access to through their school email. A 'How To' guide will be sent to you and posted on the school website.
- A timetable detailing this provision will be sent - there will be between 4 and 5 lessons a day, and the week will include two tutor sessions and one wellbeing session. Mr Elliott will be writing to you shortly with expectations for teachers, students and parents
- The majority of lessons will be 'live' - students will be invited to a team, resources will be posted, and at a given time the team will meet, with the teacher leading it. There may be occasions when students are set work to do, but these will be the exception
- Students need access to a device which allows them to see and hear what is happening, and ideally one where they can actively participate in conversations and chats and can upload work. If there are issues with this, please complete the form that was emailed earlier today
- A new tab on the website 'Spring 21' will be dedicated to everything lockdown related - from timetables to guides to FAQs to wellbeing tips. Please bear with us as this is populated
- Heads of Year will be in weekly contact with parents - from Monday 11th January your first point of call will be your child's HOY

DfE announcements

As I have been writing this letter Gavin Williamson has made a further announcement regarding examinations. This is obviously of huge concern to the older students, and at this point I urge you to simply



listen to your child's worries. There are no final answers as yet - schools will be submitting grades, but Ofqual has yet to respond about how we will be asked to make decisions and what data/internal exams we may be asked to administer. The focus has to be on ensuring all children are actively engaged in their online learning. We will work alongside you to help motivate and encourage your child in this.

There is no purpose in making promises to you which I cannot keep. I don't know when schools will reopen, and I cannot reassure exam students that everything will work out for the best. What I can promise is that I will do everything I can to keep you informed as quickly and as accurately as I can of the latest developments, and that my staff and I are united in our priority to help and support all students to the very best of our abilities.

Let us work together from now to make the very best possible out of such a difficult situation.

With very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Gould', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mary Gould

Headteacher