

26 March 2020

Good morning everyone

I think the theme for today has to be “we’re all in this together”, and with that in mind, my email this morning is going to go out to all staff and parents. I’ve had a huge amount of great, positive feedback from both staff and parents. Everyone knows how much work is going on. And I’ve also had some heartfelt anguish from people, both staff and parents, because what we’re doing is proving to be really, really difficult. We are, indeed, all in this together, and the line where parenting ends and teaching starts is even more blurred than it was before.

And today, of course, is the beginning of our country’s lockdown.

I’ll be here all day as usual, happy to support and help, meeting with people online (we are all getting used to seeing ourselves on screen these days), but I have one main message for everyone:

Be kind to yourself and be kind to our children.

This is an unsettling time for everyone, and we need to look after ourselves and our families. We cannot do everything we want to do.

To our parents: that means that we cannot do all the work at home that we thought we could do.
To our staff: that means that we cannot do all the work at home that we thought we could do.

So:

1. For our College students, our structure has started very well, and they are going to find patterns of learning with their teachers that work for them. We should listen to them (while remembering that not everything a teenager thinks is as wise as he or she thinks it is). Our timetable of lessons will keep rolling along, but parents can work with staff on the best way to keep our young people engaged.
2. Our teachers will be there, present, on screen, in person. And everything they are doing is recorded. So if a better time to access the learning is at a different time to the lesson: that’s absolutely fine. Go for it.
3. For our Primary students, we have cut down the amount of work we are asking children to do. When small children are at home, they need to do home things as well as school things. They need to have fun.
4. And for our Primary students: they will see plenty of their teachers, but it’s okay if we don’t see plenty of the children all the time. Mrs Coxon enjoyed meeting one student when he was on the toilet yesterday: that’s probably a bit too intimate.

5. For all of us: our job as teachers is to provide a full, interesting, engaging online programme. That's what we're doing, and I'm proud of the work our teachers are putting into this. We are making changes as we go too, especially in Primary, because we are learning how to do this. And our teachers are also looking after their families and their children too.

Which means: if you are the parent of a Primary child, we are giving you lots to do with your child to support you. We understand that it is hard at home. We know how much is going on. We do not mind if the best thing for your child or children is to run around the house ten times and jump on the sofa for an hour. It may not be good for your sofa, but it may be the best thing for your child.

Be kind to yourself and be kind to our children.

We will keep learning together.

Keep talking to us; keep being patient and supportive; and remember that we are a community who supports each other.

(Otis, my grumpy cat, by the way, is nowhere to be seen. My girls are with me and he runs away whenever he sees anyone he's not sure about. Which is pretty much everyone...)

Kind regards
Alex

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