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## Principal's Newsletter

15 January 2021

Dear Parents,

Even on the rainiest of days, a visit to the Prep and Pre Prep raises the mood. My wading boots, mask and hat mean I am addressed by many pupils as “the cowboy” or even better “Howdy Cowboy”, an honorific title I am glad to embrace. In small groups, pupils and learning support assistant and teachers are working hard, learning interesting things from how to use direct speech quotations to how to pronounce words with the letter R.

Occasionally, one passes the disembodied voice of a teacher, working from home, who is in fact in contact not only with the children in the classroom here on campus but with all our remote learners in their respective homes. It is a triumph of technology and also of the capacity of our marvellous staff to work together and innovate on the fly.

Then there are the exceptional steps to keep pupils learning. Mr Fox is a man with a van, driving to addresses across the city to deliver books, materials, IT, all of course at a safe distance. There are even stories of pupils receiving a laptop already open to the Teams joining page. The enormously high percentages of engagement in the primary phase allow us to focus on those pupils and families who need support to access the learning. The situation is healthy and encouraging in secondary but there is much more room for improvement in terms of the percentage of engagement and the quality of that engagement by pupils. For example, why is it that pupils in secondary are more likely to have computer microphones that are failing than pupils in the Prep school? Applying Ockham’s razor to this phenomenon, the only explanation is that one group has some members who are manipulating the situation.

Wherever possible, especially in secondary, parents should keep an eye on their child’s engagement with Teams lessons. It is difficult for teachers to respond immediately and effectively to a pupil who chooses to play on their computer rather than respond to the learning tasks. If you are home, try checking up.

This sort of dedication and collaboration is undoubtedly the silver lining amidst the gloom. Behind the scenes, the juggling of timetables, staffing, routines, and learning strategies has been constant, swift and effective. An example is the roll out of one to one support through Teams in some limited fashion, something we did not get up to in the last lockdown but which we are now committed to introducing, expanding and perfecting. That and the fact that each day more people are being vaccinated and in this limited sense, summer and

school are now definitely getting closer and not further away. This means we are planning, scheming one might say, about all the lessons and insights we can apply from the pandemic experience to make our school even better and to keep moving forward in the areas where the pandemic has shown we can improve what we do.

Mrs Cassidy has made sure we are now a testing centre. Staff and secondary pupils who need to be in school can be tested with the so-called lateral flow test. There is so much that we have all learned about things we knew nothing about one year ago!

Today is the last day that Nicki Styles, our secondary inclusion mentor, will be working at Liverpool College. Ms Styles is much loved and much appreciated and we are all very excited that she has achieved a tremendous promotion at St John Bosco. Ms Styles has helped us to become a much more inclusive school and helped lots of pupils and families with her advice and support. We wish her all the best.

So far so good from Oxbridge. We are still waiting for Cambridge responses where we had more applications and more interviews, but a record number of 4 students hold offers just from Oxford at the moment. This process, now dependent on zoom calls, is always a test for pupils and also for their teachers and their school. Hopefully, the Cambridge offers will pour in at the same 80% success rate clip.

My requests for submission for LC Press did not as yet yield a contribution from a parent or pupil, so we will try again this week. The podcasts and blog posts can be diverting in the rain and the context of limited movement outside the home. [www.lcpres.org.uk](http://www.lcpres.org.uk)

A brief reminder of our admissions consultation which can be found [here](#).

May I wish you and yours a safe, dry, and pleasant weekend.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mr H van Mourik Broekman**  
**Principal**