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## Principal's Newsletter

16 October 2020

Dear Parents,

Upon my return to school, my immediate impression was a sense of gratitude and awe for the efforts of staff and pupils. Conducting school and inspiring young people in these circumstances is both brave and difficult, and our staff do so brilliantly across all the year groups. I am particularly struck by the speed of innovation as we flip back and forth between on-line and face to face teaching and the way that all aspects of the school seem in some way to have found a way to keep going. Although the news about our local situation is very concerning, the response from our entire school community is full of confidence, determination and flexibility.

My week was made yesterday morning when I received an email from a parent seemingly sent from a coffee shop nearby:

*I've just been in Cocomo Café and am writing to congratulate the school boys on their courtesy and impeccable manners shown to the staff. It was noted by a few customers.*

*Seeing the children demonstrate maturity and life skills always makes me happy [my child] is a pupil there.*

Then there is [this video](#) which we have been asked to share from our local powers that be.

In an environment where children are viewed and discussed primarily as vectors of illness, non-attenders and possible sources of infection, one has to admire the dignified and focused way they continue to get on with the business of school.

There are reported changes in pupil learning in the school. Many teachers feel that the independence and responsibility of pupils for their learning has increased. They, so teachers say, are more focused. Mr Fox assures me that his A level mathematicians are cranking out amazing work. Similar reports of academic focus pop up elsewhere. There is also another important life lesson which we are all learning in real time: good citizenship, the subject of [my assembly](#) for the school recorded from my kitchen table.

Into this climate is launched the Liverpool Inspire programme for Year 10s across the city. Each school has nominated pupils for the programme which seeks to raise aspiration and encourage pupils to aim for applications to the best universities. Yesterday I zoomed into their first lecture delivered by a Scouser Oxbridge academic on the slave trade and Liverpool.

Through Zoom, one can pop into other meetings as well. Ms Hyatt, Ms Odita-Sani and Ms Diamond held an update discussion with parents on the work of their group on anti-racism and inclusivity in the school. Parents made several suggestions. Already this work is bearing fruit in either refining our curriculum or changing aspects of it entirely. We hope to be able to provide you with a full update on the work of the group and the changes it is bringing about before Christmas.

Advance notice about mock exams for Y11 and Y13 parents – these will take place:

- Year 11: 30 November – 4 December 2020
- Year 13: 7 December - 9 December 2020

Mrs Lines has also asked me to request that secondary phase parents download the SIMS Parent App and to look at it regularly so you can monitor your child's behaviour and achievement points and access their reports. For more information about setting up SIMS Parent App, please [click here](#).

Yesterday was also a D of E training day, a day of normality as Ms Cassidy calls it. We constantly have to risk assess and educationally assess these and other activities. What is important, as one parent wrote us, is to keep pupils moving, exercising, and looking to the future. A D of E training day is certainly a great way to do that, but so are our forest schools and Mr Cook's well-organized Saturday morning sports sessions. Even these glimpses of normality make us thirst for the return of full freedom in our curriculum and the myriad activities that make up a day at the College. We must keep doing these things in part so we do not forget what we are working towards.

The Prep School are certainly doing their bit this half term to stop us forgetting. Year 4 classes have visited Barnstondale for a day of abseiling, climbing, team building and archery, Year 3 and Year 5 pupils enjoyed a virtual reality workshop organised by Mrs Doran while other pupils took part in a live [out-of-this-world workshop](#) with famous special effects company Industrial Light Magic. The Prep weekly activity sessions have seen pupils take part in a huge range of activities from cookery, drama and scouts to book art, Forest School, yoga and leadership skills to name a few. The Prep School also celebrated their Harvest festival with pupils creating an autumnal tree in the Sutton Timmis Hall decorated with messages of hope and thanks.



Spare a thought for our poor boarders who have been self-isolating in our new boarding house. They live together as a family, and have begun to invent all manner of activities to build their community spirit and get through the frustration of not being able to go to lessons in person.

Mr Bishop reports that the sound of music can still be heard:

*It is fantastic to hear a variety of instrumental lessons taking place in our various music rehearsal spaces! Yesterday saw drum, flute, singing and clarinet lessons taking place, some delivered online and some in person, all by our fantastic team of peripatetic teachers. Whilst we're trying to get everything back to (a new) normal as quickly as possible, we do appreciate*

*your patience if lessons have not yet started for your child. Please bear with us as we try to get lessons going across the College as quickly as possible.*

Today I met with a group of illustrators who are creating art work for a new book I am writing. What is so striking in these encounters is the enthusiasm, and the need for a purpose and a task. As a person who is still drawing stick figures, I have overweening respect for the skills and dedication of these young people. Now is certainly time to take on projects in art and music, complete UCAS forms, read a very good book, in my case Walker Percy's *Lost in the Cosmos*.

Whereas I am bouncing back in after sitting at home waiting for my new hip to embed, pupils and teachers are hanging on until half term. One more week. We can do it.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mr H van Mourik Broekman  
Principal**