



27 March 2020

Dear parents,

Today is officially the last day of the Spring term! As end of term approaches in any normal term, pupils and teachers are generally clinging on in the expectation of a well-deserved Easter holiday. In truth this is unlike any other term that any of us has ever experienced. Our priorities have had to quickly fall in line with the national effort to save lives. We have stayed open to care for the children of key workers whilst simultaneously, collectively and rapidly implementing a new system to run school.

New priorities, new ways of working

I could not be prouder of the way colleagues and pupils have adapted in a very short space of time, even as many people are struggling to find the right balance. This has been an important week to test our remote learning programme in our efforts to ensure that our pupils at home can continue to enjoy a broad and balanced education. We have learned a lot in a very short space of time about remote lessons. The collaboration between our departments has been superb and I'm grateful for the very positive feedback and for the understanding from pupils and parents to this new way of working. Not everything will have gone smoothly but please know that everyone will be doing their very best to provide an excellent learning experience for our children at home.

It's fair to say that remote learning has been a bit of a novelty this week, but we need to ensure that it settles into a sustainable daily pattern that works well for students. Everyone's circumstances are different, but we are keen to make sure that all of our students are engaged, stimulated and active, but are also mindful that the schoolwork set by our teachers doesn't add to the stress in the household. We are also mindful of the mental and emotional well-being of our girls and boys, isolated at home and away from their friends. This is just as important and I know that our pastoral team of form tutors, heads of year, chaplain and school counsellor are working with Mrs Ellison to stay in touch.

At the same time, it's been really important for us to ensure that the school environment is as safe as it can be so that we can look after the children of key workers and staff who are here. In the last week we've had between 25 and 58 children of key workers each day across the prep and senior schools and are very pleased to do our bit to help.

The glue that binds

Walking into school this morning to film my video blog was a strange experience. It feels so different without the usual cheerful sound of pupils. In the words of that catchy song by Joni Mitchell "*you don't know what you've got till it's gone*", I've been reflecting on our school as the glue that binds people together, a community from which people draw strength and comfort. Human beings thrive in community and it's difficult for everyone who now feels less connected to school than they are used to.



The good news is that we're not going anywhere and the manner in which people have responded to this crisis just gives me great faith in the strength of our Truro School community. Levels of anxiety have been high and there are many people who need our support. We've offered to help in our local community. Right now, we are working with a local charity to trial using our school kitchens to help to prepare, vacuum pack and distribute meals to vulnerable families whose children are eligible for free school meals. Now more than ever we need to look beyond ourselves and in the words of John Wesley *"Do all the good you can"*.

Support for Truro School families

Much closer to home there is a need for us to support many of our own parents whose businesses have been hugely impacted by the shutdown. We are very conscious of the sacrifices parents make to send their children to Truro School and we are aware that there will be much nervousness in the current economic climate. We are also deeply sensitive to the fact that the Summer term bill is due soon. As you would expect we are actively doing the following:

- Reviewing the Government's job retention scheme and applying this approach to as much of the school operations as possible;
- Reviewing our goods, work and service contracts for how we can avoid or reduce costs;
- Stopping any further costs that we can for the remainder of the academic year.

We will be writing to parents towards the end of next week about fee arrangements for the summer term and for next year. We are doing all we can to ensure that the fees set reflect both our cost mitigation efforts and our desire to assist parents who might otherwise be forced to withdraw their children from the school. Your support and investment in the School is hugely appreciated and we feel this even more strongly at this time.

We've just celebrated our 140th birthday this year and I for one am going to do all that I can to make sure that I'm on the invitation list for the 150th birthday party in a decade's time!

Staying engaged to support exam grades

Going into the Easter Holidays our 5th Year and Upper Sixth students face a particular uncertainty around how their exam grades are to be determined. I would exhort them not to worry. There is a cast-iron commitment to ensure the process is fair. I'm also confident that our teachers really know our students and will be bringing their judgment to bear in advocating for predicted grades.

The professional judgment of our teachers is going to be of paramount importance in this process because, according to Ofqual, one of their judgments will be on the grade that each student is likely to have achieved had s/he sat the exam. With this in mind, it's very important that students continue to engage with their teachers and do their very best in the work that has been set. The announcement from Ofqual will be next week, but anything students can do over

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the coming weeks to keep up the momentum and add to the evidence base to support exam grades can only be a positive thing.

The crisis will end

For the Upper Sixth, next term will be important as our guidance programme continues about next steps to university and beyond. For our 5th Year students, with the exam pressure off, I'm quite excited about what we can do later in the term to make a start with some A level material and perhaps get them thinking about an extended project qualification that will positively impact on their own university applications when the time comes. There's plenty of time for us to work on these enrichment programmes.

Despite the dark days we face, I am sure that the values that have allowed Truro School to prosper will hold us together until this crisis passes, and it will pass.

My sincere thanks again for such a remarkable response to these extraordinary events. I hope that as families you all have some relaxing time at some point. Stay safe and we look forward to us all being back together again soon.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A S Gordon-Brown".

Andrew Gordon-Brown
Headmaster