

28th March 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Closing the school yesterday for the Easter Holidays was a strange and unsettling experience. Without the “bomb burst” of pupils eagerly heading for their buses or walk home, and our customary farewell to weary staff, it was all a bit surreal. A school is not a school without its bustling, busy community of young people and adults.

Even though I would never wish to go through this experience again, I continue to be extremely proud of the pupils and staff at GTS. As a community we have really pulled together showing a calm resolve and resilience in adapting to a completely new way of doing things. There is no chapter in the Headteacher’s Handbook called, “How to close a school with a day’s notice and continue to provide an education during a Pandemic”. In fact, there is no handbook! I am therefore extremely grateful to all the staff, pupils and parents who have risen to these challenges.

We must all realise that it’s going to take time to settle into a new rhythm. Family, school and working lives have been turned completely upside down by the impact of Covid-19. None of us have ever experienced anything like this before and it is only natural that it will take time to establish new routines and patterns with work and life. Overall, the use of Show My Homework (SMHW) and SAM Learning (SL) has been well-received and staff are developing new and innovative ways to set worthwhile lessons. However, I do appreciate that some pupils and families have found staying on top of things challenging. I need to assure you that all we expect is for all pupils to do their best to complete a meaningful amount of work each day. Deadlines are in place to help keep pupils on track and provide focus and structure to their work, but we recognise that some pupils may require flexibility as they complete their work. Getting the balance right for everyone is impossible. For some there is too much work and others not enough; I simply ask that you all approach the work in a way that best suits your family’s circumstances. Please find time to play games, bake, read, watch films, exercise and do all the things that we never have time for as families. Yes, there needs to be an academic focus but we must not lose sight of the importance of our well-being during this period.

In the next few days, I will be writing again to explain how we intend to continue to support and safeguard pupils during this period of closure.

I am hoping that following the Easter break I will be in a position to give you some idea what the longer-term picture might look like. Up to this point, we have been reacting on a day to day basis, which has been challenging for us all. I am aware that the Year 11s continue to be concerned about their Exam results; all I can do is once again reassure you that they will not be disadvantaged and we will let you know how the grading of Exams will be managed just as soon as we know. For now, please do keep working hard.

I do believe we will be closed for an extended period, so it is essential that we all continue to support each other and maintain a sense of community. We are investigating ways to share our experiences online and to post images, videos, songs, poetry, baking competitions etc. to keep in touch. More to follow on this; please get involved when the time comes.

I wish you a peaceful and happy Easter with your families and loved ones. Please keep safe and well.

Yours faithfully



Andy Bloodworth
Headteacher

GTS