



Habsmonmouth Schools

From the Principal **Mr James Murphy-O'Connor** MA Oxon

17th April 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

I hope that you have been able to stay safe and well in these extraordinary times and that you have had a peaceful Easter with your families. For those members of our community who are on the front line at this time, we offer our sincere gratitude and full support.

It does not seem that long ago that our schools were closed as a result of the Government's policy of lockdown to limit the spread of the coronavirus. However, in that time a great deal has occurred in our schools. In particular, I extend my thanks to our staff who have worked throughout this time to support the children of key workers. We have many parents who are on the front line trying to deal with the crisis and I know that they have really appreciated their children being in school to enable them to focus on doing such a brilliant job of caring for all of us. Many of these parents have kindly written to express their gratitude. One typical example I received stated:

The current battle against covid-19 has affected us deeply as a family. We work on the frontline of healthcare and we have never experienced challenges as great as we are facing today. The support the school is providing to us though key worker provision is carrying us through this difficult time and we are tremendously grateful. The staff are putting themselves at risk every day and yet they continue to give our children fun and fulfilling days. Please could you pass on our thanks to all those involved.

I am sure that we all recognise how extraordinary this time truly is in our history. I have been humbled by the considerable number of parents who have written to offer their ongoing support for our schools, and we are most grateful for this. We have had to make some important decisions such as reducing our fee level to 60% (we believe this to be the lowest fee of any independent school in the country) and we have furloughed 90% of all our support staff as part of our strategic planning. Another recent email stated:

We have every confidence that the fee level set represents what the school needs to achieve from parents in order to remain operational, whilst also providing job security for hard working and valuable members of staff. We are a community, and as such we all need to support each other, to make sacrifices, and work together for the good of our children. Only in this way, can the school come out on the other side of this and be in a position to offer the same standard of educational provision it always has, by the same truly wonderful and extremely caring staff.

The Summer term starts on Tuesday 21st April and we are focused on delivering the most dynamic and interactive service we can through our newly constructed remote learning provision. This can be accessed via our website www.habsmonmouth.org/online and there are links to a whole range of initiatives and advice covering Teaching and Learning, Enrichment and Pastoral Care. **'Habsmonmouth online'** will streamline access to the various platforms the teachers will be using to deliver the curriculum and assignments to your children over the weeks ahead. You will note the emphasis on assessment and feedback as we recognise the importance of this in every child's progress. Our Year 11 and 13 students have been written to separately at this challenging time for them. Our senior schools' Academic Deputy

Heads and prep schools' Curriculum Leaders will provide further direction should you need it as we adjust to this online resource.

One of the expressions I often use at home and for which I am often teased is '**normality is good**'! At this time this seems particularly apposite in two ways. Firstly, we hope to deliver as normal a service as possible over the coming weeks. I have every confidence that our staff here will rise to the challenge and that your children will have a positive educational experience. We would welcome your feedback and suggestions to make this even better, day by day. Secondly, we all hope for a return to some sort of normality before too long in all aspects of our lives. I suspect that it will be a different world then but as soon as the Government directs us to re-open our schools, we will be ready to offer the outstanding breadth of education for which Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools are renowned.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "WJ Murphy-O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.