



Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools

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

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents

I hope that you remain safe and well.

I write to you after the inaugural **Virtual Open Day** last Saturday which was hugely successful. I am most grateful to all my colleagues and our students who contributed to this as we continue to plan for the future. I am delighted to say that we had 332 new users with 7783 'page views'! The highlights were the wonderful student testimonials, with considerable 'traffic' to the virtual tours section. Even though there was a pre-recorded panel session with the Heads answering key questions, a further forty-eight parents sent questions during the morning.

It is now apparent that England and Wales differ on their plans for a phased re-opening of schools. As a result of our location, just inside the border, we will be following the guidelines set out for Wales. We will continue to keep you updated on developments, but it looks increasingly likely that we will not reopen until September. We will continue to offer support for **children of Key Workers** as we have since March but this service remains available only to those children who have both parents on the frontline. We need to keep numbers to a manageable and safe level - any new children joining the provision must have both parents being key workers who are unable to work from home.

The **Governors' Cobra team** set up in March comprising governors and representation from the Haberdashers' Company, continues to meet at least weekly by video conference to keep up-to-date with developments and to provide great support as we navigate our way through these challenges. At each meeting, the committee discusses and debates a number of standing agenda items, including: remote learning and pastoral care; latest pupil number projections; marketing and admissions; financial and cash forecasts; HR considerations; and planning for the schools re-opening.

As you will be aware, we have moved quickly to reduce the impact of the lower income by stopping capital expenditure projects, seeking donations to our Development Fund and taking advantage of the government scheme to furlough nearly 300 staff. In addition, we have managed to secure a £5m coronavirus bank loan to plug some of the gap between incomings and outgoings, but this will, of course, need to be paid back over the coming years.

To complement this team, the **Executive Committee** continues to meet online every week. We are focused on making the key educational decisions in these strange times. From this week's meeting, I am pleased to update you on the following:

We will be issuing **school reports** for the Summer term; it might be that there are slightly amended formats, but we feel that it is important to give you this important feedback to aid your child's future learning;

We have reviewed the calendar and practicality of arranging **internal exams**, and have agreed that there will be no summer internal exams in both Monmouth School for Boys and Monmouth School for Girls. To ensure rigour of continuity of assessment, various subjects and departments may be

using their own tests during the first part of the Michaelmas term. Nearer the time, individual schools will be in touch with details for the relevant pupils;

We have also made the sad decision to cancel **Speech Day** for all of our schools at the end of the term. We are keen, however, to mark the end of school life for Year 13 and we are working with the Heads of Sixth Form to consider a special event for them at some point in the future;

We want to continue to support our senior students through this time and have decided to 'unfurlough' Mrs Denise Gray so that she can work with the Heads of Sixth Form -and the wider Sixth Form team of Housemasters, tutors and Heads of Year, to continue to coordinate all **Careers and UCAS** matters. We are enormously grateful to Mrs Ann Johnson for her unstinting and excellent work at the Girls' School over the past few years and wish her well as she prepares for retirement.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you think we can help in any way and thank you all for your continued support during these unprecedented times.

I wish you a happy half term.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "WJ Murphy-O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.