



Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools

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

11th September 2020

Dear Parents

We have been delighted with how term has started across our schools. Whilst there have been a few unforeseen issues, the detailed planning of recent weeks has helped students return and settle back into a really positive routine. We are most grateful to you all for your patience and support over the last few days.

As you will be aware, we have moved to a new communication platform (My School Portal) which we hope will make future letters, notices, requests and information easier for you to access and store. Please bear with us over the next two weeks as we work to embed this system more fully.

I presented to all teaching and support staff this week to welcome them back and to highlight some plans for our future, building on the important changes which have already been made over recent years. One of the key areas of focus for me is promoting the Health and Wellbeing of all members of our community and especially the pupils in our care. This week, we have opened a new Health and Wellbeing Centre at Monmouth School for Girls and a second one will be introduced at the Boys' School in the next few months. We have augmented our team so that our nurses, healthcare assistants, counsellors and others can work closely with our doctors to provide the best care possible. Over the course of this year, we will be appointing a Head of Wellbeing to our Leadership team and s/he will be charged with helping to enhance our culture through exciting new initiatives such as an Annual Schools' Wellbeing Conference with key note speakers and working towards a Standard of Excellence in Wellbeing for our schools.

As you will be aware, there has been a centralisation of key support functions with my appointment last year. We now plan to streamline the key academic functions across the senior schools as well and there are many good reasons for this. We recognise that the two senior schools have different characteristics which we are keen to preserve but we are also keen to share the impressive talent among our academic staff and SMT colleagues to the optimal benefit of both schools. In this light, David Edwards has started as Senior Deputy Head Pastoral working across both senior schools.

The new structure will be fully implemented in September 2021 and this academic year will act as a transition period for some colleagues. The new organisational structure will be:

Principal

Head MB and Head MG

Senior Deputy Head Pastoral – David Edwards

Senior Deputy Head Academic - Teaching and Learning – Kath Whiteman

Senior Deputy Head Academic- Professional Development - Liz Gregory

Head of Boarding (Assistant Head) – Alex Peace

Head of Sixth Form (Assistant Head) – Rachel Rees

Head of Academic Progress and Digital Learning (Assistant Head) – Darian Evans

Head of Wellbeing (Assistant Head)

I hope that you will join me in offering your support to these colleagues as we move towards this new structure. More details will be forthcoming, but I was keen to communicate these changes to you and to start the new school year on a positive message of progress. We now have policies which reflect our family of schools as one institution, as required by Estyn. There will be other key areas to bring together - and some inequalities to address - but we are moving to a good place!

I have written to the members of the Executive Team to challenge them to reflect on the experiences of lockdown and our response to this. Whilst there can be no doubt that our teachers responded superbly well in adapting to new circumstances, and whilst we were pleased with the Remote Learning platform, we recognise that there is a great deal to reflect on so that we are in even better shape in the future. The key areas of focus for us to deliver are:

- A calm and safe reintegration experience for our pupils
- Clear, timely and honest communication with you
- Excellent feedback on your child's progress
- Ensuring that applying for financial assistance is accessible and transparent
- Trying to promote as much extra-curricular activity as possible
- Harnessing the latest technology for teaching in the classroom and online.

To help facilitate the need to be able to improve classroom teaching and adapt to online provision, we have made a significant investment in rolling forward key elements of our five year 'IT Strategy'. All teachers now have Surface Pros and fully integrated white boards, while pupils from Year 10 and up are now able to bring their own device to school. This has brought an extra dynamic to classroom teaching and will also ensure we are in a stronger position to deal with any future disruption posed by quarantines or rolling lockdowns.

As ever, I remain available to answer any questions you have.

Kind regards

Liz Murphy - O'Connor