



Watford Grammar School for Boys

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Headmaster: Mr I Cooksey MA (Oxon) MA (Lond)

5 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

A new year, take two!

As you will no doubt be aware, the government have announced that schools will be closed until at least February half-term. For students, parents, teachers and school leaders this is a truly testing experience. I should like to set out for you what you should expect for your son(s) from the school in this period. We have learnt a lot from the experience of the last lockdown and we are confident that our online provision will get as close to a live school experience as is possible.

Lessons

From next week all students should expect to attend live lessons every day, following their normal timetable. (A reminder that for most years this current week comprises a mixture of live lessons and set work). Where there is staff illness or any other reason why a lesson cannot take place, a message will be placed for your son in the relevant Google Classroom as soon as practicable. These lessons may comprise live interaction with the teacher throughout, or for significant periods - for example the beginning and end sections of the lesson may be live with periods of time for students to work in between.

Engagement

As soon as practicable, we intend to set up a 'same day' reporting service to you, so that you are alerted whenever your son does not attend a lesson. We will also contact you if your son's teachers are concerned that, although he is attending lessons, there are issues with his engagement with work. We will also be reporting to you on your son's progress in line with our usual schedule of reporting dates. Additionally, we intend to retain our programme of parents' evenings using our new online tool.

Pastoral Care

All students will also be expected to attend two 'form periods' per week from their timetable (half an hour between 10.30 and 11.30, depending upon the year group), where contact with form tutors and the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum will be maintained. Form Tutors and Heads of Year will be available as usual for students and parents. School staff will also be in regular additional contact with all students about whom we have previously registered concerns, for example about their wellbeing. We will also continue to provide adapted counselling services, where possible.

Years 13 & 11

The news about school closures is particularly troubling for students who were due to sit public examinations this summer. We have been told that summer exams will not take place as planned. Whilst we await news of what is to replace those exams, we will continue to prioritise provision for these year groups, as we would in any other year. We can assume that there will be equivalent assessments at some point and all students in these years should expect to sit appropriate assessments on their return to school.

Mass testing

We will continue to explore how to set up as a testing centre, as this would appear to be a helpful measure for whenever school does re-open, and for the potential benefit of keyworker and vulnerable children who are in school. To this end, we will shortly be sending out consent forms for you to return. Our thanks to the many parental volunteers who offered their services to assist with this programme - we were delighted with the response and we are likely to ask for your help at a later date when we roll this out.

Last term, we surveyed students on their experience of the first lockdown. It is clear that many found it an experience detrimental to their wellbeing. The two most common suggestions made by students as to how their experience could have been improved by school were i) live lessons and ii) contact with teachers and other students through form time, both of which we hope we are addressing this time around.

With best wishes for a safe and healthy 'lockdown',

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian', followed by a large, stylized flourish or scribble.