



18th May 2020

Dear parents, carers and members of the Chessington School community,

I write to you on the Monday of our 9th week of online learning. Thank you for your continued perseverance and support of all of our young people throughout this time. I know how much of a challenge it must be and I urge you to keep fighting the good fight so that we enable our children to learn, connect and develop even through this. I also want to take the time to thank our teachers for their relentless efforts with online learning but also the work they are doing daily in school to ensure ALL of our young people have excellent learning opportunities.

Over the weekend, following the wave of messages that came towards parents and schools throughout the week, it was clear that the practicalities and processes of young people returning to school are sitting heavily on the national conscience. You will have seen that as secondary schools we have been requested to put into operation a plan for 'some' face to face teaching with certain year groups; for us at Chessington that is Year 10. Whilst this is encouraging news, we have not had a specific start date in the same way as our Primary colleagues. It is important that this is not viewed as a potential return to normal schooling for students and will not be the 1st of June. Given the need to observe social distancing and protect all members of the community, we are planning a variety of scenarios, all of which will have your children and our colleagues' safety as the most important factor to be considered. You will have seen nationally that lots of assurance and guidance are being requested so that, as schools, we can protect all of our community while learning. I am conveying this message with the purpose of managing the expectations of parents and students who are longing for a return to some kind of normal schooling immediately. At Chessington we want to see our children, we want to teach them face to face and we want to be doing all we can to help them through this challenging time. Soon, with some students, we will get to that. However, safety remains the paramount goal and we will only begin a phased reopening when we can be sure we have put in all we can to achieve that goal.

The AfCinfo (Achieving for Children) website is being constantly updated with information and resources to support children, young people and families during the Coronavirus pandemic which you may find helpful:

www.afcinfo.org.uk/kr-covid19

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As Year 7, 8 and 9 parents you will no doubt be understandably anxious with little being spoken of in the news or nationally with regards to these year groups. Even though it appears that there isn't a light at the end of the tunnel it is essential we remain upbeat and engaged in our children's learning with these year groups. I am reassured by the reports from staff about the level of engagement, enthusiasm and energy being put into their lesson work and home learning and really am looking forward to the successes this will bring. We are continuing to develop new ways to make online learning ever more engaging and developmental. From our student survey we are pleased to see their engagement and appreciation of this. Their hard work will not go unrewarded as they continue to progress and cover key curriculum content.

Next week is Half Term. I would like to inform key worker parents and those other identified parents of specific groups of children that the school will remain open including the bank holiday. I am looking forward to more socially distanced fun over the half term and if Easter is anything to go by it will be brilliant. All of us at Chessington are more than willing to work to support our young people and although there will be no online lessons we will be sending out some other enjoyable activities. If any students are eligible to come to school (in holiday time or term time) and want to take up this opportunity then please contact the relevant phase leader and they will be made very welcome. This includes those that may not have taken up this opportunity yet.

In my weekly video message to our children I asked them to ignore the noise of the news and focus on their learning. I asked them to persevere and use time to become excellent independent learners. Even when schools start a phased opening, there will be a mix of online and school based learning so let's use this to become even better at that. Please remind your child to check for deadlines, instructions and lesson material in each part of their Google Classroom. We want to encourage this perseverance so that they can problem solve and guide their learning. When they have tried then they of course must ask for help but let's ensure they really are trying to problem solve first.

This Friday is our Year 11 leavers assembly. Year 11 parents please remind your child to be online for the assembly at 1330 on Friday. Other parents remember it is a half day with lessons finishing at 1200. I cannot tell you how much I am personally going to miss each and every one of our Year 11s. They are a wonderful bunch of young people full of such a range of personalities, each unique and brilliant in their own way. On a personal note, this group and I started together on the same day in September 2015. We have shared 5 years of change, growth and enjoyment together. As I write this a mixture of a huge smile and slightly dewy eyes set on my face. That's how all of our children make us feel; we care deeply about them, we share so many experiences and we want the very best for them.

We miss them, all of them and we are here whenever you need.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Ali
Headteacher