

16th December 2020

Dear Parents,

Thinking back to early September, perhaps you will agree with me that it was impossible to predict whether the School would be able to remain open throughout this long term, let alone provide all elements of the excellent, all-round academic, pastoral and extra-curricular education of which we are so proud. It gives me a huge amount of pleasure, therefore, to reach the end of term and recognise that the experience of the past few months does balance out positively.

There has been regrettable disruption to a number of groups of students, and they have coped admirably with the dislocation and the shift to blended learning, whereby they have connected to their lessons from home. Overall, though, we have been fortunate to avoid having to isolate a whole year-group bubble at any time, and that has been a huge plus. Students have spent more time than ever before with their form tutors, building deeper relationships as a result. The School Counsellor, Mrs Abbi, has run a variety of workshops and provided useful information via Firefly on a broad range of topics related to mental health, wellbeing and young people's welfare.

On the extra-curricular front, a wide choice of activities has been offered at lunchtimes and after school, and we have been delighted by the number of students participating with their customary enthusiasm unabated. We have been pleased to hold a number of special events through the term, covering a variety of areas of School life and often involving virtual visitors making use of technology to speak to our students. Over the holidays, you will receive the latest edition of *The Independent*, our School news magazine, with full details of what has taken place this term.

I have great admiration for the way in which our students have coped with the realities of School this Autumn. Reading over their reports in the last couple of weeks, it is clear that the vast majority have worked consistently hard and with the determination to make the most of their opportunities to learn and progress academically. They have been cheerful around the School and amazingly patient with the rules governing our COVID-secure campus and the consequent limitations on their normal freedoms.

Whilst we have been able to maintain a great many of our activities, and even invent some new ones, students have had to go without quite a lot of the usual colour of WGS life: large-scale music and drama, whole-school assemblies, inter-school sports fixtures, to name just a few examples. I hope more than anything that 2021, with promises of a vaccine, will allow us to return to these vital aspects of the School experience.

I am sure you will join with me in extending huge thanks to all members of the teaching and support staff, who have worked incredibly hard and shown extraordinary determination throughout the term to ensure that your children have received the best education, care and opportunities possible under current circumstances. My Senior Management Team have provided excellent leadership to the WGS community and boundless support to me in my first term as Head, and I am extremely grateful to them as well. Necessity being the mother of invention, staff throughout the School have demonstrated great resourcefulness in mastering new ways of teaching and working over recent months. Some of what we have learned to do under COVID-19 will be

helpful for the future too, so we will look to keep and evolve the most durable of our innovations.

Whatever the next phase of the pandemic, 2021 provides an exciting new horizon for WGS, notably with our intention to extend classes in the Junior School to Reception and Years 1 and 2. As we have said previously, if anyone would like to lodge an enquiry or find out more about our plans, Jane Morris in the Admissions Office would love to hear from you.

Those of you with children in public exam years are reminded of the government's recent announcement about adaptations to GCSEs and A-levels, which I explained in a letter to you a couple of weeks ago. I have since met with Year 11 and the Upper Sixth for year-group Assemblies to explain the situation as it stands and answer their questions. There are still some unknowns, especially about IGCSEs, but our professional association, the HMC, is lobbying the government for further clarity and I shall hope to be in a position to update you in January. The basic advice to public exam students remains the same, however: keep working hard, both in view of the expected exams and in case we have to provide an element of Centre Assessment Grades.

A couple of practical reminders as this letter draws to a close:

- Should your child test positive for COVID-19 up to Tuesday 22nd December, please let us know via our dedicated email address covid@wgs-sch.net so as to assist with track and trace.
- Term resumes again on Tuesday 5th January (a 'blue week' in the two week timetable). Come the New Year, if your child is needing to self-isolate for any reason, such that their return to School will be affected, please contact us via covid@wgs-sch.net on or before Monday 4th January.

Finally, one of the frustrations of the current situation is that I have not been able to meet parents in person as the new Head. I regret this profoundly and, once circumstances are more favourable, we shall work to ensure that appropriate opportunities are provided for this to happen.

In the meantime, I wish you and your families a safe and restful period over the Christmas holidays, and I look forward to seeing your children return to School in January.

With best wishes



Alex Frazer
Head