

27 April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are keeping well and are in reasonable spirits. I think that as we move into the next phase, to borrow Winston Churchill's words, "This is not the end ... but it is perhaps the end of the beginning." One of the aspects of the present situation which is beginning to become quite tricky is not knowing when this is going to end, or really having any control over the future. Similar I'm sure to many of you, I'm slightly concerned about my dad, who is 79. He likes his own company and was quite enjoying lockdown, but he is now beginning to worry about when he is next going to see his children and grandchildren. I know many of you have far greater worries and real concerns – be they over health or finances. We are concerned particularly as educators about our students – their well-being as well as their learning. However, we've had contact with quite a few and I've been really impressed by many of our students' resilience, positivity and independence! Some are already significantly helping out in their local communities too. Having said this, we understand that others are facing significant obstacles and challenges. We have created a very short questionnaire and would be enormously grateful if you would complete this in order to give us some feedback on how things are going so far for your child/children:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Hiwzz8D4KUifGHZ6Hu0oyfLBNj-lxB1Nti3roloyu-NUQTRWQ1Y5WEJLMDhNRVg1VkjSFFEQk84Ri4u>

I'm afraid that I really don't know any more than you about what is coming and what will happen next as we draw near to the deadline of 7 May. We are already thinking about when we return to school and we will of course make any adaptations that are recommended to keep all our students and staff as safe as can be. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again! I may be wrong but at the moment it seems unlikely that we will be back before this May half term. If we continue to still largely work remotely after the next deadline, we continue to need to know which eligible children will be coming into school. The updated booking sheet for school support for the children of key workers and vulnerable students for three weeks from the week beginning Mon 4 May can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Hiwzz8D4KUifGHZ6Hu0oyfLBNj-lxB1Nti3roloyu-NURjJBRININDJCRk5GOFJSNEgxNERRUkQwNi4u>

Please use this link if you need to request a place or ring us on the school number.

Reminder: We have sent out quite a lot of information and advice about online learning and our provision. This can all be found on our website under: Curriculum – Home Learning:

<https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/curriculum/home-learning/>

At the end of my letter you will find a page detailing our considerable support and opportunities for students to access reading. Not just because I am an English teacher at heart, I can't emphasise enough how this lockdown is an opportunity for your sons and daughters to get reading, if they're not already. I'm very aware of how reluctant many teens are, especially with the prevalence of the digital world, and I know you've heard this before, but reading really can be a salvation. Not only does it stimulate thinking and the imagination but masses of evidence testifies to how it supports mental health. With my own two sons, one reads regularly and the other is reluctant – dare I say it even quite lazy about reading. I still read to him some evenings, and he actually quite enjoys it. Anything you can do to promote and encourage reading in this time will be of great value. The accompanying page overleaf lists a number of platforms and details about support for reading and a separate letter tells you all about our new Wheelers e-platform in detail.

Principal: Mr James O'Connell

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All of the Heads of Year have now published a newsletter using 'SWAY' and delivered an online 'assembly' message (some have done two). Having bullied them all to do this, some less keen than others (!), I have also just sent out an online message. It makes me cringe and it's safe to say that it won't be going viral but hopefully, if nothing else, these messages reinforce our key points that we miss our students, and that it is important to stay positive, to be resilient and optimistic, to keep working and learning as much as you reasonably can, to be kind and helpful to others, and to take the opportunity to do what you enjoy and try something new.

We have been collating information to systematically contact all students on a routine basis. This will mean you should receive a call from your child's tutor or another member of staff at some point if you haven't already. These calls are aimed at making and establishing that simple, personal contact that we all need, to check on well-being primarily and then to see how the online learning is going and how we can support.

We have finally been able to send out the first batch of £15 food vouchers to eligible families (those eligible for free school meals). Thank you for your patience and we will continue this. Our canteen cannot open at the moment due to the current situation; therefore those coming into school need to bring a packed lunch. We are just in the process of issuing as many school laptops as we can to families who have requested one and we are about to receive nine more from the new government scheme designed to support disadvantaged Year 10 students in particular. Please get in touch if you are struggling and would like to request IT support.

I hope you have a good week and that we will be a bit clearer about the next stage this time next week, when I'll be in touch again.

Best wishes



James O'Connell
Principal



TCS Instagram Account

This Instagram page has been set up to keep students and staff up-to-date with book news, reviews and recommendations. Please join in, contribute and follow.... it is being updated regularly by the school library team.

Staff are invited to email book recommendations, or anything book related to: rebecca.booker@googlemail.com.

'Wheelers' e-Platform

Please see the separate letter from our librarian, Tess Masterman, attached with this letter which details this great, free platform which enables students to borrow books – in written form or audio – for free.

A new survey by The Reading Agency says reading connects a nation in lockdown...

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/media/new-survey-says-reading-connects-a-nation-in-lockdown.html>

Reading Resources or services that our students have access to:

MyOn

Renaissance Learning providers of Accelerated Reader – are currently giving free access to over 700 full text online books both fiction and non-fiction. The books cover a whole range of topics including science, maths, literacy, sport, hobbies, animals and different fiction genres plus graphic novels. These books can be used for quizzing too, and there are additional news articles going up regularly on interesting current affairs topics. Access via the MyOn logo on the school website home learning page.

Audible - free audio books for kids

Amazon Audible have made hundreds of children's books available for free to stream whilst schools are closed and children are at home. You don't need an audible account to access them and they can be listened to immediately on a laptop, tablet, smart phone or ordinary desktop computer. Access via the Audible logo link on the school website home learning page.

Online Magazines

Information soon to be emailed to students regarding how to access current and back issues of the following magazines until October: BBC History, BBC Music, BBC Science focus, Geographical, The Biologist, Chemistry World, New Internationalist, Prospect, World Today, Resurgence and Ecologist... this free trial is provided thanks to exacteditions.com

Devon Public Library - e-book service

Devon libraries have expanded their range of both adult and children's e-books, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and online resources in their digital library in order to ensure that they are widely available during school and library closures. For more information about joining or to download the Libby App please visit <https://www.devonlibraries.org.uk/web/arena/join-thelibrary>