

4 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hoped last week that we would have a little clarity on the way ahead by now but instead we just have hints. It's dangerous to speculate but it seems highly likely that we will not be having any form of normal school running until June at the earliest. At this point, staggered returns to school seem extremely likely. We are contingency planning and have lots of ideas about how to safeguard students and staff when we do resume, but of course a lot depends on the detail of what the government release and we will be guided by the scientific advice. We are of course very keen to reopen school as soon as it is safe to do, but the key word in this sentence is obviously 'safe'. We do recognise that some students and staff may not be able to return to school straight away for their own health reasons, so of course there is a lot to consider.

We have been speaking to lots of students and parents over the last week and we have also been reviewing survey responses from yourselves, students and staff. At the end of this letter is a summary of what some of you have fed back. Overall the picture is pretty positive and thank you for your feedback. We need to consider feedback to our students; we also need to think about how to keep things relatively simple whilst also being varied and engaging – so using some video and interactive sources whilst also trying to limit the number of links and platforms – again, no easy answers. I have been really impressed and heartened by the positivity and resilience of so many students who are making the best of things. I say this whilst recognising that, for some students and families, this is an incredibly tough time. A good analogy I came across last week is that whilst we are all in the same storm, we are all in very different boats.

The key message is that if your son(s)/daughter(s) are continuing to do some work each day and keeping some routine, doing a bit of exercise and connecting with peers, that is a great achievement and the key goal. No school in the country is going to be able to stay up to date with their original curriculum plan and things will have to change when we return to school. This is not all bad. The overriding concern and focus of our efforts, and I'm sure yours as parents, is the wellbeing and mental health of our children. What this situation has highlighted is how (of course!) the social connections we make are paramount in our lives and particularly for teenagers, school is an essential part of this. One silver lining of all this is that we recognise the power of community and I've heard that quite a few students actually admit to missing school! We miss our students and there is a real opportunity in all of this to build and strengthen our community when we return. There is a recognition from many that we are very much all on the same team and I'm excited about returning to school and capitalising on this to really bring us together as the great school that we can and will be.

Major excitements in the O'Connell household this week have involved an incident with a magpie flying through a window and getting trapped in the house. I was unfortunately in school but it took my wife 45 minutes to get it out of the house. My sons failed to help but enjoyed filming the incident – I've been banned from putting the film on social media. One of our key aims as parents has simply been to get our sons to play a more significant role in household chores – cooking and cleaning. I confess that this has been a limitation in our parenting and we're making erratic progress. This week, having cooked a stir-fry, we were met with outrage when it was suggested that my sons clear-up as well. I suspect that many of you are doing better than me.

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There are a number of links at the end of this letter including one to our advice page on remote learning and another to the booking sheet for school for vulnerable and key worker children for the next three weeks if you need to book your son(s)/daughter(s) in. **The VE day bank holiday this Friday 8 May is not on the sheet but if any key workers need us to support you by looking after your child/children on this day, please contact me direct ([james.oconnell@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk](mailto:james.oconnell@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk)) or ring the school.**

PARENTS OF STUDENTS DUE TO COMPLETE EXTERNAL EXAMS THIS SUMMER:

We continue to feel deeply for those many students who are frustrated and disappointed not to be able to take their external exams this summer. A reminder and link to the latest advice from the government on this is below.

We are busy creating clear and objective criteria for the collection and submission of grades and ranking order for every student in every relevant subject. A reminder that we cannot release or discuss this information, but we will of course be doing our utmost for our students whilst being scrupulously honest and fair.

Head of Year 11, Ms Brown, Head of Sixth Form, Ms Milsom, and tutors, and our Head of Careers, Ms Hussain, have been contacting all students due to complete this summer to check on students' plans and progress. Please do contact them or me if you have concerns or want advice. There are 'TCS6 Headstart Programme' materials available on the online learning link below and we will shortly update these with further materials for Year 11s. If your son/daughter is due to start at an alternative Sixth Form college or university next year, please do contact these institutions direct. We have places available and are keen to engage with any students who are interested in returning to us. There is also a link below to careers and higher education advice services.

Results days this summer have been confirmed as the same as the original dates: 13 August for A level and level 3 qualifications, and 20 August for GCSE and other level 2 qualifications. There are further details in the below link about follow up procedures but there will be an opportunity for students to sit the exams that they couldn't take this summer as some point in the autumn. I'm afraid we don't have further details on this yet but we will ensure that we support all of our students, whether they have 'left' or not, as best we can.

Best wishes



James O'Connell  
Principal

LINKS:

- Contact details for members of staff in school: <https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/general-information/staff-list/>
- Online learning link: <https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/curriculum/home-learning/>
- Booking sheet for school for vulnerable and key worker children: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Hiwzz8D4KUifGHZ6Hu0oyfLBNj-lxB1Nti3roloyu-NURjJBRININDJCRk5GOFJSNEgxNERRUKQwNi4u>
- Latest Ofqual information on exams and grading in summer 2020: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/880540/Summer\\_2020\\_grades\\_for\\_GCSE\\_AS\\_A\\_level\\_guidance\\_for\\_teachers\\_students\\_parents\\_FINAL\\_UPDATED\\_21APR2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/880540/Summer_2020_grades_for_GCSE_AS_A_level_guidance_for_teachers_students_parents_FINAL_UPDATED_21APR2020.pdf)
- Link to careers advice: <https://www.teignmouthsecondary.co.uk/curriculum/careers-education/careers-links-and-resources/>
- TCS6 Headstart Programme: <https://www.tcs6.co.uk/induction-tasks/>

## PARENT SURVEY FEEDBACK – April 2020

112  
Responses

08:21  
Average time to complete

Active  
Status



1. How is your child/children coping with the lock down?

Well	35
Fine	27
Ok	45
Not so well	4
Badly	1



2. How is the online learning going?

Well	24
Fine	20
Ok	51
Not well	15
Not happening	2



3. Is your child/children getting:

Enough work	83
Too much work	16
Not enough work	13



4. Is your child/children getting enough feedback?

Yes	27
Some	56
Not enough	19
None	7



5. Is your child/children:

Suitably challenged	94
Finding the work too easy	6
Finding the work too difficult	11

