

BRYANSTON

23 March 2020

Dear parents,

It seems a lot longer than six days since I last wrote to you. A great deal has changed since then, not least that the picture has become even more unsettling and worrying for all of us. For the first time in British history, schools have all been closed and these are unprecedented times.

It was fabulous that almost 350 pupils, more than half the total, were able to join me via Microsoft Teams this morning for my weekly Headmaster's Assembly in Coade Hall, the final one of term. I know that many of you watched it too, and I am grateful for the feedback. The next one will be at 8.30 a.m. on Monday 20 April. As I said during my Assembly, the sun is shining, Spring is definitely here, but without the pupils, the feel of the School is totally different. They are greatly missed and there is a hollow, empty feel to the final week of term.

Now that almost all the pupils are safely home or with friends (and we are confident that we will be able to get the last few still here to family or friends by the end of the week), our immediate priorities are making sure we follow the more stringent government guidance, that all of our staff are safe and well, ensuring that work is being set and marked, that we are preparing for next term and, lastly, playing our part in contributing fully to the national response to coronavirus. On this last point, I am in contact with our MP, with Dorset County Council and with numerous other local organisations and charities about the support that Bryanston might offer over the Easter period. I have asked for volunteers among the staff, and the response has been amazing.

In addition, although we are following the stricter government advice on working from home and on social distancing, all of the teaching staff are working hard remotely this week to complete reports, check in with their tutorial pupils and to set and mark assignments. The School remains fully operational; we are also running a large number of workshops for staff, to ensure that come the start of next term on Monday 20 April, they are ready

to go with a full curriculum. David James, the Deputy Head Academic, will send out more details in a separate email shortly. In the meantime, if any pupils have any questions or are uncertain about their work, they should email their tutor.

We are first and foremost a school, but we are also a business, and like lots of businesses, there is huge concern and uncertainty about what lies ahead. Whatever it is, it will be tough; there are some things we can control, but there's a lot we can't. I realise, of course, that many of you are in exactly the same position and I can certainly empathise. The Governors are well aware of this too, of course, and Julian Greenhill, the Chair, will write to you in due course. In the meantime, I would ask for your patience, while we think and plan. No doubt, some tough decisions about reducing costs lie ahead. We won't shy away from them, although we are determined to treat all members of staff fairly and kindly.

On the subject of the Governors, let me reassure you that they are now meeting regularly (albeit virtually) to discuss what needs to be done to remain viable from a financial point of view. The School is fortunate that they have done a first-rate job in their wise and prudent financial stewardship of Bryanston in recent years. We are also working hard to ascertain what the Chancellor's measures for business might mean for us. In addition, I have written to our local MP to ask that the independent sector is not forgotten about by Government. If you have the chance, I would encourage you to likewise contact your MP to offer that same reminder.

Let me end by saying to you what I said to staff this morning. I am very proud to be Headmaster of Bryanston at this present time. I can say quite honestly that there is nowhere else I'd rather be. The attitude, commitment and behaviour of the pupils, the staff, the governors and you, the parents, has been magnificent and humbling. It is very much appreciated, not least when the A2 pupils in particular, feel so sad about the abrupt end of term. It is my privilege to be the person with the honour of leading the School through this crisis. Although we have a battle on our hands, Bryanston will endure and continue to thrive, but we need your support; we will likewise support you as best we can. We must stand together and come through this together.

I relish the challenge ahead and give you my word that I will devote all of my energies and commitment to the School in the months ahead. I will remain here throughout and please don't hesitate to get in touch if there's anything I can do for you. The School will remain open and we will provide whatever assistance to the local community that we can, if and when it is needed.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Mortimer
Headmaster