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Headmaster: David Clark, BA, M Phil (Cantab)

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Dear Parents,

I hope that you are all well and feeling a little bit more upbeat about recent news and developments. There is a clear sense that we are beginning to get on top of the pandemic – though aware that there is a long way to go before we defeat it. Boris Johnson’s latest announcements have given us a real boost in so far as there is a plan emerging about the re-opening of schools. We are currently planning in earnest to re-open our Bexhill site (both the prep and nursery) and we will be going out to parents very soon with our strategy to maximise safety whilst ensuring a meaningful educational offering. There is also a very real possibility that Year 10 and Year 12 students will return to school by mid June and it is important that such a move happens, as those year groups are currently in the middle of their GCSE and A Level studies. Again, we are considering various scenarios and we will update parents the minute we have clearer guidance from the DfE.

In the meantime, remote learning continues apace and I am hearing more and more examples of good practice taking place in a range of subjects. We are nevertheless aware that students are, quite naturally, spending a large amount of time in front of a screen so we are looking at ways of reducing that ‘electronic intensity’. For example, we have asked teachers to set far less prep for younger students whilst giving them the option to extend their learning if they want to. At a recent SMT meeting, we also discussed the desirability of regular ‘drop-down’ days or afternoons in the coming weeks whereby the timetable is suspended and students are given a range of tasks to complete from a menu of options – none of which requires the use of any type of electronic device. For year 9 students, the plan is to make their learning more focused – so we will ask them, from June 1st, to prioritise subjects that they are continuing with at GCSE whilst dropping subjects that they are certain to give up. Rest assured, however, that any Year 9 student is welcome to continue studying the full complement of subjects if they so wish – we are simply looking at ways of minimizing some of the undue pressure that they are experiencing. More detail will follow from relevant heads of key stage in the coming days and, in the meantime, Mrs Buckland (Head of Welfare) has asked me to share the link below with you – a very useful tool to support parents in understanding the needs of their children during lock-down:

<https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/courses/be-the-adult-a-child-needs-during-lockdown/>

Equally, we are launching our 'Pre Sixth' and 'Pre U' programmes on Monday 18th May for Year 11 and Year 13 students and I am grateful to the many staff who have created and launched the courses in such a short space of time. Having looked at the content and opportunities provided, I am rather envious too – as our Year 11s get to start their A Level subjects early whilst the Year 13s will be able to opt for courses in the likes of Geo Politics, Literature & Society, Budgeting & Personal Finance and Digital Literacy. Some of the Year 13 leavers have gone one step further by asking to continue with A Level extension classes with their teachers to even better prepare themselves for university level study – that shows real dedication.

One of the unexpected benefits of the lock-down, is that parents have gained a clearer idea of what actually goes on at School and I have appreciated the regular messages of support about our postings on social media. The videos or art work that you all get to see, give you a real insight into the many talents of our students and staff and please continue to follow us as often as possible. BAS TV has proved another useful tool and, because it is only available via Firefly, it is not a public forum so we can use it for posting material that is solely for the BAS community. For example, we are in the process of receiving applications from Year 12 students who would like to take on positions of responsibility from September – as Guardians, Bronzes or Heads of House. Under normal circumstances, the candidates would have the opportunity to 'pitch' to the whole school or to their Houses – so we are looking at the possibility of transferring that process to BAS TV... and watch this space for updates on how that is going to work.

Finally, I want to share a quote with you that I heard online recently... *'we are all in the same storm, but not necessarily in the same boat'*. Bearing in mind that we live in a lovely setting in East Sussex and we are 'enduring' a pretty gentle lock-down, I feel that it is rather appropriate – because, despite the difficulties, I am grateful that we are largely safe, we are well fed, we continue to be well educated and we are enjoying quality time with those we love.

Have a good weekend.

David Clark