



Battle Abbey School
Battle
East Sussex
TN33 0AD
Telephone 01424 772385
Facsimile 01424 773573

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

Letter to parents **12th June 2020**

Dear Parents,

For me, this has been the week, more than any other, when I have longed for normality. Usually in mid-June, we look forward to the end of exams and those ‘lazy, hazy days of summer’. Here at Battle Abbey, we would normally be preparing for our Big Picnic, which is a wonderful coming together of families from nursery to senior school. It is traditionally a time, too, when staff and students collaborate and organize Proms, summer balls, croquet competitions and leavers assemblies – lovely events that live long in the memory. Instead, we still find ourselves in some sort of societal and educational limbo. We are enjoying the easing of restrictions but we are still facing so much uncertainty. Having been constrained by government guidelines all this time, I am detecting a slight change of tack from the authorities and it appears that they are increasingly likely to give individual schools and headteachers a semblance of autonomy in certain key areas. If that is the case, we will rejoice as I am confident that we are well placed to support all our students in a safe and healthy way going forwards.

I am sure that, as parents, you have your concerns and anxieties about the future and I will endeavor to deal with some of those now. Students in Years 10 & 12 will be allowed back to the Abbey in small groups before the end of term and Mr Usher will be going out to parents soon to outline our plans for them. The media has suggested that those year groups may also face disruption with their exams in 2021 and, be assured that as a school and a sector we are applying intense pressure on the DfE to avoid any such problems for another year. In fact, I am of the belief that these current year groups are probably at an advantage as they have continued to have high quality teaching throughout lock-down and, once we return to school, we will put in place all necessary catch-up measures for them. That will therefore put them way ahead of many of their contemporaries – and they should be able to approach their exams next year with a very real spirit of positivity. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding those in Years 10 & 12 of the importance of compiling a portfolio of strong assignments and assessments over the coming weeks and months just in case a similar situation arises again.

Parents are equally worried, no doubt, as to the odds of schools re-opening in September. Ever the optimist, I am pretty sure that we will re-open fully and I am increasingly convinced that, by then, the 2m social distancing guidelines will be reduced to 1m. If that is done, we will be able to operate more or less as normal. If that doesn’t happen, we are currently contingency planning various scenarios and looking at additional premises in town and also consulting with a high-end marquee business to see if they can provide us with suitable outdoor learning spaces.

I daresay that parents of boarders are most apprehensive about what will happen in the autumn. The boarding team have been working hard on planning for the return which will include providing quarantine facilities for those from overseas. Again, every effort has and is being made to ensure the highest standards of health and safety as we are desperate to get everyone back and on track with their learning. Needless to say, a huge vote of thanks is needed to all the staff who are going above and beyond to support us with these complex but important tasks.

Much work has also gone into re-arranging our calendar for the remainder of this term and over the summer holidays. From now on, I will provide you with calendar updates every Friday to alert you to events and key dates for the coming week – but please bear with us... as so much that we are planning is subject to alteration as and when DfE guidelines change.

For the week commencing 15th June, the main focus will be on the assessments we have created for all students in the senior school. A different approach will be applied to each year group and your child should be pretty familiar with what to expect. Once those assessments are complete, we will then update you on a variety of virtual events planned for the remainder of term including sports day, our summer concert and indeed Speech Day.

Our social media output continues to impress and I am delighted that so many people follow us on our various platforms. It has become clear that Facebook is a tool used almost exclusively by parents... it seems as though students wouldn't be caught dead on Facebook if it's a platform used by mum and dad! What has been encouraging too is that we have attracted support from a growing number of former students and it is lovely having their feedback and reminiscences too. Best of all, the content that is downloaded is as good as ever and, as a Humanities teacher, I am learning so much from other disciplines and have loved watching the likes of Live from the Hive and Kitchen Science. Just this week, the Art, Photography and Biology departments have collaborated on a new project entitled 'Flower Show in Photographs' and I would encourage as many of you as possible to participate – it is a terrific idea that deserves our support.

To conclude for today, I felt it appropriate to share with you the opening lines of 'A Tale of Two Cities' by Charles Dickens written in 1859. It is one of those quotes from literature that keeps springing to mind and the moment as its sentiments appear remarkably pertinent for 2020.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Have a lovely weekend and best wishes to you all.

David Clark



Battle Abbey School
Battle
East Sussex
TN33 0AD
Telephone 01424 772385
Facsimile 01424 773573

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