



June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome back! I hope you and your families are well and enjoyed some sunshine over the half term week, which might seem like an all too distant memory by now.

As my first official communication to you, I'll admit that it does seem a little strange to be doing so in the current climate. I had imagined assemblies to your children and coffee mornings with yourselves but we are still some way away from that as I write. As I said in my letter to you last month, later in the term, we will find ways to give you an opportunity to talk to me if you wish, if only from a distance!

For you and your families though, it's probably more about getting back to business as usual and I'm already heartened by the great work that I'm seeing set for and being completed by our students, both remotely and for those students attending our key worker provision in school.

As we are beginning to see changes and moves towards the easing of lockdown, we are of course beginning to turn our attention to wider opening; first through some face-to-face support for Year 10 students and then, when the guidance allows, to other students. For current Years 7 to 9 this is likely to be from September and we await further information from the Department for Education on what this might look like. We have begun to work through draft plans, risk assessments and some of the many operational issues surrounding this already and we will communicate these to you as soon as we can. If you are the parent of a Year 10 student in particular, please can I urge you to keep an eye out for communications in the coming days as and when we are in a position to be able to do so around reopening to your children during the week of 15th June.

In the meantime, staff are working really hard to ensure they are giving your children the best possible provision and we are constantly trying to find ways to improve what we're doing. Part of this is an addition of a specific Literacy slot to the weekly timetable for students in Years 7 and 8. This is to support students with their core literacy skills with a focus on reading and vocabulary skills. It will be every Wednesday and build on the work done so far this year. If you're a parent of a Year 10 student and they haven't handed in all their assessments, we would really appreciate a gentle reminder from you to do so. For all students, your continued support ensuring work is completed is always welcomed.

Staff are trying to develop the use of audio and video in remote lessons through Microsoft Teams. This is an area new to some of us and Excalibur Trust are working closely with the school to provide some training for staff who need it. If you can support us in this endeavour by being patient and also helping your son or daughter to access these types of lesson would be great. In case you need a bit of help yourselves (I certainly did!), there is a useful clip that talks you through how to access and use Teams here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l14MWTXz-aE&feature=youtu.be>.

Of course, we also continue to try and look after the pastoral care of our students too. We will continue with the ongoing contact with key members of staff at school and to offer the range of support through contacting the safeguarding team, SEND team and wider pastoral staff too. Getting engagement and support from as many families as we can with these things is so important to ensuring that our young people receive the very best care and education, so your support in this is greatly appreciated.

Finally, thank you for all that you are doing for your children. I know as a parent myself that this is not always straightforward or easy and many staff share similar burdens as you. Please be assured that we are constantly reflecting and reviewing what we're doing; it would be easy in the current climate to think that we are not and I know that staff certainly worry about this. If you have any constructive feedback on our remote provision, or want me to share any praise and good news you might have with staff please do email the office at jogoffice@excalibur.org.uk and mark it for my attention.

In the meantime, please do stay safe and look after yourselves and your families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hawthorne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'H' being particularly large and stylized.

Richard Hawthorne
Head of School

