



18th June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. I thought it would be good to write to you with a few highlights from the past week or so here at JOG.

We have of course, been busy preparing for the return of Year 10 students and the related logistics. It has been challenging but rewarding, planning to run face-to-face support, in tandem with the onsite provision already in place for children of key workers and alongside continuing with remote education for all year groups. I'm sure you can imagine the challenges of trying to balance this and offer the best we can for all our students. It has been lovely to see more of our students and be able to offer them some personal support both academically and pastorally. We only wish we could offer this even more widely but unfortunately we cannot until the guidance changes. It's probably timely then, to reiterate that remote learning remains the main mode of education for all children of secondary school age, including JOG students. Therefore, for all students we want to keep offering the best we can in the circumstances we find ourselves in.

As part of our ongoing strive to develop and improve our online learning offer, staff participated in a remote training session hosted by Excalibur Trust on using Teams last week. This included showing staff how to do things such as voice over presentations, upload videos via Microsoft Stream, set assignments in Teams Channels, use the chat function and set quizzes through Microsoft Forms. These are the things that we want to be doing more of so that students can get the best from their learning. We've asked staff to apply their training over the coming weeks and try to use these functions more and more, as some departments have already started to do. Please be patient with us though, for many of us this technology is as new to us as it is to students! Meanwhile, we'll continue setting and monitoring work in the usual way and your ongoing support for your children in this is greatly appreciated.

Of course, the wellbeing of our students and ensuring they have as much pastoral support as possible is not something we've forgotten. We have been making regular contact with parents/carers throughout lockdown to check in and see how things are, and from this we have been able to assist with any queries. We do try to be proactive and offer support for specific needs and, where we can, we've offered provision such as the 'Time to Talk' counselling service, Mental Health in Schools Team work for some students, transition meetings for some Year 11's moving into Post 16 settings as well as some bespoke one-to-one support remotely and some socially distanced home visits too. I'd like to put on record my thanks to the staff involved in this part of our work; providing this support remotely is not easy and can be very time consuming, but it is also a duty we take very seriously and part of what makes JOG such a special school community.

There are lots of things we could celebrate from the last week or so, in terms of the work we've seen being done by and coming in from students across the year groups. For example, in KS3 students have been working hard on their Food and Nutrition work and I've seen everything from some delicious looking birthday cakes to upside-down cakes and a mood board on Spanish food. Whilst in Product Design, students have taken to a free online programme called TinkerCAD to produce some truly stunning designs. We look forward to being back in school to be able to 3D print some of these creations on our brand new 3D Printer machine, currently on its way from the Czech Republic – funded by Hungerford Rotary Club. Staff have been sending me the names of students who are working particularly hard in their subjects and I have examples for things ranging from pieces of work that stand out, to meeting deadlines in advance, reacting really well to feedback, engaging brilliantly in Teams live lessons, working hard in our school provision and even students who are doing so much running that they've completed the equivalent of two half marathons this month already; personally, I'm tired even thinking about that!

These are only a few of the things we could highlight and it really is heart-warming to see the hard work and resilience students are showing and so many are doing themselves proud. Behind all of these things are the efforts you put in with your sons and daughters and the dedication of the staff to making sure we give our best and continually learn and develop in our current circumstances. I am mindful that we are all starting to suffer from lockdown fatigue, but please be assured that we're doing all we can. From you, we ask for your continued patience and support and I would like to offer you a quote I've been using with the Year 10 students this week from Malcolm X who said, *"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."* Despite COVID-19, I still think that this remains true and, as I have done with Year 10, I would strongly urge all students to make the best they can of the education on offer right now.

As I write, there have been more stories in the media around reducing social distancing, the government's ambition to provide some support to school children over the summer holidays and talk around what schools might be like come the new academic year. Like you, we await further information about all of these things with anticipation and if and when we're able, we will of course communicate with you further.

In the meantime, please stay safe and continue to do as much as you can to support your children with their education. I wish you all well and will write to you with further updates soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Hawthorne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname "Hawthorne".

Mr Richard Hawthorne
Head of School

You can visit our [website](#) to see examples of some of the fantastic work being completed at home.