

19th March 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian

Thank you for the many messages of support and gratitude received from parents which have been a huge encouragement to everyone at College.

Yesterday afternoon I found some time to get away from responding to urgent issues relating to the COVID-19 virus and spent some time talking to staff and students. What I found was a determination to teach and learn despite the uncertainty we face that I thought was impressive. There was also a sadness on the part of teachers and support staff that they wouldn't now see our students for the foreseeable future.

Shortly after 5pm yesterday the government announced the closure of schools and Colleges and given that I was critical of their previously contradictory advice and lack of clarity it is only fair that I acknowledge that they have addressed most, if not all, of my concerns with the following announcements:

1. Colleges are to close from Monday for all students except vulnerable learners, High Needs learners and the dependents of key workers.
2. Colleges are to remain open in the Easter holidays for vulnerable learners, High Needs learners and the dependents of key workers
3. There will be no exams this summer. The details are not yet finalised but teacher assessment in some form is preferred by the government.

The key question now for our final year students is how will their grade be awarded. The suggestion is that it will be based on teacher assessments and, should this be confirmed tomorrow it is vital that your son or daughter completes any work and assessments set by their teachers during the remainder of the course. The government has said that they will communicate the detail tomorrow and I will share this with everyone as soon as I have it.

I am unsure as yet exactly who will count as vulnerable learners, high needs learners or the dependents of key workers and await government advice on this. Please can you let us know if you are a 'key worker' and you need your son or daughter to be supervised at College. We are contacting vulnerable or high need students and/or their families to see what arrangements we need to make. Please let us know if you think your son or daughter should be attending College and we have not been in touch.

We will support our community in the fight against COVID-19 by ensuring that our facilities remain available to students who might otherwise require parents to remain at home. Similarly we will welcome any student who needs somewhere to work. In other cases students should remain at home as part of the government's strategy to suppress the spread of the virus. Please ask your son or daughter to let us know if they will be coming into College.

Studying on-line is the means by which we will attempt to minimise the disruption to their learning. Clearly this is no substitute for seeing teachers and attending lessons on a regular

basis and so for those students who are returning next year we are planning how we can consolidate this learning as part of their second year. Please help us to help your child by reminding them of the need to complete the work set by their teachers and to complete any assignments in a timely manner. This will form the basis of their predicted grades which will be used in progressing to universities, apprenticeships or employment.

Although the majority of our teachers will be working from home some staff, including our senior leadership team, will be in College throughout the closure. Please do get in touch with us if you have concerns about your son or daughter's learning and in particular if they are not being set sufficient or appropriate work and we will be pleased to follow this up with the relevant teachers and Heads of Department.

Although the College will be closed to the vast majority of learners we still aim to provide students with pastoral support, for example, tutors will be in weekly contact and will offer advice to students with regard to their wellbeing, Julie Ferman (Designated Safeguarding Lead) will contact students with details of relevant support lines and websites and will work with tutors to monitor any students that we have concerns about. Once again, if you have concerns about the wellbeing of your son or daughter and think we can help, please contact Julie (j.ferman@wsfc.ac.uk).

Finally I would like to remind everyone that we will get through this, some students will progress to university or other destinations and others will return for their next year of study at College. In all cases we will support them to the best of our ability and having made appropriate allowance for the disruption they have suffered.

Best wishes

Ed Senior
Principal