

26th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I have no doubt that we are living through a period in history that will be studied in great detail. I wonder how the girls and parents of 2030 will judge our individual and collective response? Will they be able to see the faces of shock as well as joy of the Year 11 and 13 pupils in their final assemblies on Friday 20th March? Will the books be able to convey the solidarity of the staff who volunteered to support the daughters of Key Workers who came into school on Monday, or witness the strangeness of carefully measuring 2m distances between each girl? I don't think many of the memes or videos that are being shared will appear in text books, which is a shame because the film of Miss Pooley teaching us to juggle certainly deserves to be! I do hope the selfless actions of those that continue to go to work to keep us safe will be remembered, from those who work in the NHS to those that serve in all the essential services. If that is you or a member of your family, thank you.

It has been a week for the majority of our girls since they have been in school and I imagine the novelty is beginning to wear off. Each girl will respond in a different way and as the length of time grows then I am sure it will test the resilience, patience and sense of humour of even the most stalwart Watford Girl. I can assure you that it is the same for the staff. Our usual working life is about pace; teach at speed, learn at speed, get to your club, run a cake sale, get the homework done and talk (always at speed) to your friends. Suddenly we have stopped and there is no pressure to be anywhere and learning is very different to that found in school. If possible, please try to remember:

- Be a guide, not a teacher. If your daughter is stuck on her work, try not to give her the answers, she learns best by working it out for herself. Encouraging her in her search will help her to learn and deepen her knowledge. If she is really stuck, then say 'do something else and go back'.
- Boredom can be good. If your daughter runs out of work to do, then try not to fill her time for her. This is when she could be most creative, be inspired to read a book she hadn't tried before or learn a skill she did not previously have time for.
- Keep to a timetable but allow flexibility. If your daughter is inspired to go into more detail about a topic or, if she needs time to really try and keep trying, then let her.
- Don't be afraid to go off topic. This may be the only time you will ever be able to inspire your daughter to learn about something you know or have a passion for.

I have had a few emails from parents asking about online lessons, a system that a number of schools are trying. In a perfect world our school would not have stopped but transferred to the internet. However, I am very aware that access to technology is not perfect, that the skills of both teaching staff and pupils is not the same for all and a strict timetable of lessons is not feasible for families who do not have a mobile device each. Teaching staff are adapting to the new challenges and slowly new ways of teaching will emerge. In the meantime, access to the school network can be slow, but it is a great time to daydream while the buffering subsides.

Finally, I am sure there are some families that are struggling or are going to be touched by COVID 19 in the most distressing way. We have forwarded a newsletter from the SWHP that outlines a number of support systems. While we cannot support you in person, our prayers are with you and we look forward to the time we can be together again.

Best wishes

Sylvia Tai