



# WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

7th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

At 8:35 p.m. on Monday evening, I remembered a prayer that I had carried around in my twenties, until I lost my purse; it is called the serenity prayer:

**God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.**

I know that the sudden and frequent changes to education in the last month, well since March 2020 really, have been incredibly destabilising. Schools are built around routine, timetables and calendars, and we are now living in a time when what we planned on Monday, like the mass testing of the school population, will be changed to the delivery of live lessons for what could be weeks. This is why I have been holding onto the words of this prayer. The parts of the school life we can change and control, we will, and as to the rest, we will have to accept that plans will change and when they do, work as hard as we can to adapt.

Beyond our control was yesterday's announcement by Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, regarding the cancellation of the GCSE and A-Level exams that Year 11 and 13 girls have been working so hard towards, with no explicit explanation as to how this is to be managed. There are many analogies that are being drawn but the only one I can think of is that of a trapeze artist who has the net taken from under them as they fly through the air. As parents, I can appreciate that you are in a difficult position, trying to provide reassurance when there are no certainties. What we can control is how we will respond to these changes so I promise that the Leadership Team and I will study the Ofqual consultation that will be published next week and then the final guidance that will be presented two weeks after, communicating to you how exactly this will impact upon the girls, as soon as we can. In the meantime, please keep the message clear: stay focused on learning the syllabus, work towards the goals they have set themselves; anything which increases knowledge and improves skills is valuable.

Schools also had no control over the timing of the announcement of the testing programme we are required to undertake. Whilst I agree that this is the best way to identify individuals who are asymptomatic and slow the spread of the virus, the operation to develop a safe and effective system is a huge undertaking. When we realised that the DfE would not provide booths to allow girls to do the swabs privately, we built our own. We will start the trials of the system in the next few days and make sure we are ready for when the mass testing programme needs to be implemented.

We played no part in the decision to close the school to all pupils, except for the vulnerable and children of key workers. I do think it was the right decision but the timing of the announcements was unhelpful. Nevertheless, I know the school has had the courage to meet the challenge of full closure and the movement to online learning. Teaching staff are learning new skills on a daily basis, so they can provide live lessons and teach as effectively as they can. Mr Cowling and the IT Team have ensured that any child who is not able to afford their own device has been issued one and we expect every girl to be able to engage in a full programme of learning. Our corridors may be quiet again but learning is very much alive, being accessed through the internet.



The Department for Education has announced that they will provide data top-ups to support remote learning for students who:

- do not have fixed broadband at home
- cannot afford additional data for their devices

If you think this might be of help to your daughter, please contact Mr Cowling (s.cowling@watfordgirls.herts.sch.uk)

For any parents who need to reach out and get support, or at least spend time with others who have the same concerns, they may wish to attend one of the Supporting Links workshops that are detailed in the attachment to this week's newsletter. In my assembly this week I will be reminding the girls about the 5 ways to wellbeing, with which they should all be familiar. My focus will be on staying connected and if you would like to participate, the link is here: <https://youtu.be/Onpj5Xz98vc>.



Our girls continue to meet the 'Give' element of the 5 ways to wellbeing in so many ways. A huge thank you is due to the girls who participated in the Santa Run; they raised £2,574.79 for Herts Young Homeless.

Also congratulations to the girls of 10E, who received the following letter:

**On behalf of WTRRP families, I would like to say a huge thank you for the gift of stationery, and particular thanks are due to Sherelle and Lidia for organising the collections and deliveries.**

**As you probably know, when refugees arrive in Watford, it is only the beginning of their journey.**

**They have to rebuild their life, which for younger family members, means settling in a new school or college, learning English, and catching up on their education and making new friends. Many are worried, confused and impoverished; this year, like all of us, they have had to find ways to cope with COVID-19 but all refugee families are fantastic survivors!**

**At the start of the pandemic, WTRRP raised money to buy laptops and school uniforms. The stationery will be a great addition to this but even more importantly, WTRRP children and teenagers will appreciate that you have gone to so much trouble to remember them, especially at this time of year.**

**So thank you again!**

Well done! I am proud of your efforts and the positive impact that you are having on the local community.

If there are any further changes over the next week, within or outside our control, they will be communicated to you, but otherwise I hope you have a good and safe week.

Best wishes,

Sylvia Tai