
Principal's Newsletter

22 January 2021

Dear Parents,

Another week in the battle for forward momentum. I would like to start with an email I received from a colleague.

I just really wanted to bring your attention (as a science teacher and more importantly as a parent) to some of the absolutely top class work going on by Ms Finnegan and Ms Brooke in the Prep.

I was teaching my own Teams lessons yesterday straight through from 1-4 after lunch yesterday, so my sons were working completely independently while they both had Year 3 and 5 live science lessons - I could hear them both in the background and they kept pottering in to where I was working for rulers, paperclips and other bits and bobs. I was absolutely thrilled to emerge at the end of the day and see the work they had been doing. There was a hot wheels track set up to measure the effects of friction from different surfaces in one room, and a paper spinners investigation being written up in the kitchen. Both boys were excited to show me how they had been taught to conduct repeat tests and calculate mean average results, and could explain why this was important.

How these two teachers were able via Teams to explain the tasks, and draw out this level of engagement and activity from my kids who usually can't work out how to load a dishwasher without supervision is beyond me, and to be honest a bit of an inspiration in my own online teaching!

Not only is this stuff inspirational, the email also reflects the ways teachers are innovating endlessly with the two dimensional platform of Teams in order to create a three dimensional educational experience. It is a time of thinking about teaching and learning and making sure we keep innovating and planning for what seems increasingly likely to be a substantial period of on-line teaching.

Thanks to all of you who have written to me and to others expressing your appreciation for what we are trying to do. It really is a fillip and keeps us focused and motivated.

Seth S (Y7 Butler's) is our current inspiration. Seth is running 30 minutes a day on the treadmill for the next 5 days to raise money to support the NSPCC. His efforts have met with

substantial success so far. If you would like to support this excellent young man during lockdown in his pursuit of service to others, you can do so [here](#).

Another inspiration is the rehearsal for the Year 12 Greek play. Ms Poole and Dr McNamara have refused to let lockdown get in the way of the preparation for the play, which they hope to perform when school reopens. The Frogs is a comedy and all participants in this project must be glad that the choice of play includes the fun, absurd and satirical rather than the heavy-hearted gloom of a Greek tragedy. Students and teachers gather on Teams to rehearse the play. This is an excellent example of the show must go on.

Another inspiration is the meticulously organised and run testing centre which has been created on campus. Mr Newton and Ms Cassidy have developed a strong team of trained testers. Our staff on campus appreciate having access to testing if they want it. Occasionally, the centre has picked up a positive, thus preventing the spread of the illness among staff or students.

Another impressive effort is taking place in the English faculty where innovation has led to assessments which allow us to see how pupils are progressing. Engagement with Teams lessons has been good. The percentage of pupils logging on, especially in the Prep School, is higher than a typical day's attendance figures. In the secondary phase we will now switch on the cameras and begin to experiment with face-to face (virtually). To do this we need to keep disruption to a minimum and we need your parental help to make sure there is no misbehaviour on-line. This is a difficult task, but Ms Haynes has sent secondary parents a letter to explain what changes we are making and what systems we are using to ensure safety and security in the on-line environment.

Slowly but surely, in that inimitably dithering Gavin Williamson way, we are beginning to see the outlines of how the assessment of qualifications will work for our Year 11 and Year 13. Ms Lines and Mr Griffith have already communicated to their charges the vital importance of persisting as it seems very clear that the work our pupils are doing, and the things they are learning, will, in one way or the other, be assessed and form part of their grades. Keep going! is the simple message for now.

I am not a man who read much poetry, but these circumstances have made me reach for the poetry collections. On our [podcast at LC Press](#) we have posted a conversation with Henry Marsh, a retired school teacher and now a published poet about poetry, imagination and education. Aristotle explained how sad poems, like sad songs, strangely make us feel better through a process he termed catharsis. It is in this spirit that I am reading some Larkin, not for the faint hearted or those inclined to take a dimmer view of reality. I use TS Eliot's Book of Practical Cats as an immediate antidote when it all becomes too much;

With Cats, some say, one rule is true:

Don't speak till you are spoken to.

Myself, I do not hold with that —

I say, you should ad-dress a Cat.

But always keep in mind that he

Resents familiarity.

I bow, and taking off my hat,

Ad-dress him in this form: O Cat!

But if he is the Cat next door,

Whom I have often met before

(He comes to see me in my flat)

I greet him with an oopsa Cat!

I think I've heard them call him James —

But we've not got so far as names.

May I wish you and yours a dry and pleasant weekend.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr H van Mourik Broekman
Principal**