



# KING JAMES'S SCHOOL

## KNARESBOROUGH

21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I want to bring you up to date with several things before the bank holiday weekend, in particular our planning for some students to return to school before the end of the summer term. This is quite a long letter as I want to be thorough, I will also post a video version of this message on the website.

**Students returning to school:** You will be aware from media reports that the return to school continues to be a highly controversial topic. I think that many of the media reports have polarised the debate, and that is unhelpful. School leaders are caught in the middle of this debate. It is a seemingly impossible decision, between protecting staff and pupils from Covid-19, getting some students back in front of their teachers and kick-starting their learning and supporting their wellbeing and mental health. I have my own children in Year 10 and Year 12, so I can see this from a parent perspective as well as that of Headteacher.

In making our decisions about how to safely bring some staff and pupils back into school, we have drawn upon many sources of advice and information. We have taken into account:

- North Yorkshire Local Authority advice and risk assessment templates.
- Department for Education guidance on re-opening.
- The current position and advice from education unions.
- The views and advice of our governing body.

I am aware that parents and students themselves will have different views about whether they feel ready and able to come back to school. Your views are important and it is clear that, as it stands, no one will be penalised for not attending. There will also be some reasons why some individuals will be unable to attend for medical reasons.

The first thing to say is that we will not be re-opening on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. We will also not be opening for full year groups with a full timetable. Our approach will be cautious and flexible; we are still waiting for further scientific advice and more detail about secondary school reopening. We have a comprehensive risk assessment in place, and when we are ready for some pupils to come back into school that risk assessment will be available on our website. We will also train staff and pupils in how to follow those risk assessments.

At this stage we are planning to make available some lessons for Year 12, where their teachers are available. Home learning will continue alongside that. We would then hope to follow with some contact for Year 10 before the end of the summer term. It is likely that we will have periods when a limited number of pupils come into school and then they will spend some time learning from home again, so that we can bring others in for a catch up with their teachers.

Of course, all of this depends on the developing scientific advice and the availability of teachers. Quite a number of staff are shielding or have childcare commitments. There is another important

date coming up, the 28<sup>th</sup> May, when further decisions and scientific review will give further information about the reopening of schools.

So in conclusion, I do not have a date for you yet but we are thinking of Year 12 first, followed by Year 10. All of this will be in small numbers and they may come back for short sessions with some time still at home. One of the big issues will be around anxiety about coming out of lockdown and everyone will approach this differently. No pressure will be put on students who are anxious to come back in and we will work with them, and you, in cases where people are uncomfortable with a return to school.

I regret that it is very unlikely that Years 7 to 9 will have some time in school before September, which brings me to home learning.

**Home learning:** We know a full return to school is very unlikely before September, at the earliest. For this reason we are continuing to invest time and effort into improving online learning. We are working to increase the number of video explanations that teachers provide and we have a small working group looking at developing some 'live' explanations and discussions.

### **Centre Assessed Grades at GCSE and A Level:**

We have almost finished the process of working out the centre-assessed grades for GCSE and A Level. This has been a big task but I am very proud of the honest and rigorous way the teachers have gone about it. I am a GCSE teacher myself and I know it took many hours for the four GCSE history teachers to grade and rank order the students. It is one of the hardest things I have done as a teacher. It had to be based on strong evidence from our mark books and other information we have about how the students would most likely have performed in the exam.

This information goes to the exam boards later in June. They will have the final say on grades. The factors used in the model will be the school's historical results and the prior attainment of the current students, linked to national outcomes at subject level. For most GCSE subjects the model will use data from 2018 and 2019. A level subjects will be modelled using results from 2017, 2018 and 2019. Schools submitting grades deemed too generous (or too harsh) will have grades changed accordingly.

**And finally:** Next week (week commencing 25<sup>th</sup> May) is half term. In a normal year, this would be a time when Year 11 and Year 13 would be revising intensely and the exams starting to kick in. There would be leaving assemblies, yearbooks and shirt signing. Half term is usually the calm before the storm of exams. We are sad not to be doing these 'normal' things and we are all missing being with our young people.

I do hope you can enjoy a little more freedom in the coming weeks and I hope that we are able to welcome some of our students back shortly after half term.

Yours sincerely,



Mr CA Sugden  
Headteacher