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12th June 2020

Dear Year 7, 8 and 9 Parents/Carers

I am writing to update you about various matters.

It has now been a considerable amount of time that students have not been in school across the country. We have all had to adapt rapidly to what is now commonly called 'remote learning'. It is so much more difficult than the face to face interaction that we all took for granted prior to this pandemic. We long for those days to return so we can get back to daily school life. There appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel.

I have been so impressed by the resilience and adaptability of Farmor's students. We are so lucky to have students who want to receive an education, and are prepared to work with us through some very challenging times. I would also like to pay credit to parents and carers, who have been supportive and patient with us whilst we re-invent what 'school' looks like.

Student survey results

In our most recent survey of Year 7 to 10 students, we can see the hard work of students shining through. On average, students give 3.7 out of 5 stars for how well they feel they are getting on with remote learning. Students are working hard: 63% typically work for 3 or more hours each day, and 89% for at least two hours a day. 75% say that the amount of work we are setting is just right, although those working 4/5 or more hours a day understandably are asking us to ease off a little! Amazingly, over half of students report that they are just as motivated as they were in school. Given how difficult lockdown has been emotionally for us all, this is an impressive reflection of students' resilience and positivity.

Bringing students back to school

Next week, we will begin to welcome back Year 10 and 12 students for around a day a week each in school. There has been a gargantuan effort to organise this. We have transformed our school into a Covid-safe environment for students and staff. This experience will help us understand how to manage students when they are back in school, which will inform future efforts to scale this up so that we can have more students back on site. I know that parents are keen to get children back to school, and so are we, but we must do this in a gradual way so we can prioritise the safety and welfare of students. We are following government advice closely, which currently states that we should only have a maximum of one quarter of Year 10 and 12 students at school at any one time.



Provision across the key stages

Inevitably, since lockdown we have had to spend a disproportionate amount of time meeting the educational needs of Key Stage 4 and 5 students. For Year 11 and 13, schools were asked to take on the huge responsibility of awarding grades for students in their GCSEs and A Levels in place of the exams they should have taken. We have also worked hard to guide these students towards the next stage of their education, whether that be Sixth Form, college, university, apprenticeships or employment. For Year 10 and 12 students, school closure has had a significant impact on their studies. By the summer, these students will have missed around 20% of instruction towards their GCSE/A Levels. We have prioritised these year groups for coming back into school and developing online tutorials, as for these age groups there is less time to 'catch up' later.

I sincerely hope that Key Stage 3 students haven't felt neglected during this time. In the run up to the summer, we will be considering what else we can do to keep students motivated. I would really like to have them back in school, but this still looks unlikely to happen before September. We are awaiting further announcements from government about what secondary schools will be asked/allowed to provide for younger students after the summer. I support the ambition to have all students back in school for at least part of each week in September, and hope that the virus is sufficiently under control to allow this to happen.

In the meantime, please know that we are working relentlessly to adapt and develop our educational offer. Despite the regular bashing schools are receiving in some parts of the media, we are positive and resilient, just like our students. Your messages of support and thanks have really helped me in keeping staff morale high; thank you.

We are excited to see more students back in school next week. It feels like the beginnings of a 'recovery'.

I hope you and your families are well and also able to embrace the new freedoms.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Evans', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Evans
Headteacher