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Dear students, parents and carers,

Welcome to the most unusual summer term we could have imagined! I hope you are rested up having had some form of a break over the Easter period, even if it was just a change of routine.

I am sending this letter to parents and carers but please share it with your children - it is intended for students too.

Re-starting school without physically being there will be a challenge for us all. I am struggling to start a term, for example, without a staff meeting. Together, you and your child/ren will need to mark the working week with a change of routine, so that school term days feel different to the Easter holiday and to the weekends.

Your experiences of remote learning during the fortnight before the Easter break will have been very varied. Households differ as to their access to broadband, the number of devices available for use at the same time, indeed, the number of children in the household vying for the same resources. As a school we are trying to cater for the whole range of circumstances; we need to ensure that our learning is workable for everyone. No student should be bored or unstimulated but nor should students be feeling overwhelmed - we will continue to strive to provide a balance including opportunities to extend learning independently. Students will receive some further guidance on managing remote learning this week, based on feedback from the experience so far.

A few quick points about external examinations:

- I'd like to thank all the staff who were involved in submitting the material for IB students as requested by the IB to enable us to meet their 20th April deadline. Staff worked over their Easter holiday, Mr Auckland and Mrs Leffen doing an amazing job of supporting staff to complete the online uploads in order to ensure that Year 13 IB students will receive their results, as published, on 6th July.
- We have mentioned before, that Universities will be interested to hear from current Y13 (but also current Y12 and Y11) about how they used their time during the Coronavirus lockdown in the spring/summer of 2020...
- And for Year 11, GCSE grades are being awarded according to a very clear, published process. The grades that staff will submit according to Ofqual regulations, are confidential. Teachers will not be allowed to tell students, so please don't ask! This 3-minute film explains the process for students: [Ofqual guidance for students](#). GCSE results will be published as originally planned on Thursday 20th August.

None of us will remain untouched by this pandemic. Serious illness and bereavement are never far away but these last few weeks have brought them both much closer to home. They are complicated and

made so much more traumatic by the current restrictions. Bereavements are tough in normal times, but with restrictions in visiting those who are dying and with restrictions in how we can mourn those who die - bereavement is harder than we will have experienced before. Few of us will remain untouched by the loss of people we know by the end of this; our wider BGS community is already registering those losses. Thankfully, I am not aware of any serious Coronavirus-related illness in our immediate community of staff and students but I am fully confident that we will support each other sensitively, as we have in the past, if we hear of those in our wider community who have lost loved ones.

With a three-week extension to the national lockdown confirmed, debate and discussion are now turning in earnest to when and how schools will reopen. We will, as we have throughout, adhere to government advice and requirements and can only hope that these will continue to follow the science and learn from experiences around the globe. Yesterday, Mr Williamson dampened speculation that schools could reopen in 3 weeks and outlined the five tests must be met before schools could reopen. We must assume, for now, that we are very unlikely to be back in school before the half term break - remote learning will remain the norm for several weeks to come.

There remain so many questions about how schools will reopen when we are directed, and then, which events on the calendar will run, which will be cancelled, which postponed, and how to manage all of these. I will be planning with my Senior Management Team over the coming days and weeks about various events as it becomes clearer, in time, when we are likely to reopen. There are questions about internal exams, reports, evening events, and so on. We will all need to be patient as we feel our way through this extraordinary, evolving situation but it seems unlikely that any events involving large gatherings will take place during the summer term.

May I reassure you that we will approach all the challenges ahead, as always, in a calm and measured fashion, considering the evidence, following government advice and directives and always making decisions in the best interest of our students while protecting staff wellbeing.

We are all having to adjust to 'enforced family time'. Over time, the household atmosphere can fray a little and it's all too easy to get into petty arguments and frictions which would dissipate normally in heading off to school or going to work. We talk a great deal at school about teamwork. I think now is a good time to think of your family or household as a team, where everyone needs to pull their own weight and play their part in supporting everyone at home as a whole. I know from my own experience that this is easier said than done but we will need to try hard on this over the coming weeks.

Please pace yourselves in working together with us during the weeks to come to ensure that students are not disadvantaged in the long run. We will need to keep our humour and our patience as the weeks go by and the news gradually changes.

Good luck everyone - keep smiling and think about how free we will feel when this is all over!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SE Elphick', written in a cursive style.

Steve Elphick
Headteacher