



March 20th 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I wanted to write to update you following my communication yesterday. You may wonder why I took the decision to ask years 11 and 13 to come into school in the morning, only to then send them home again. And I wanted to explain that to you and hope you will forgive the short time lag between that decision yesterday and this letter.

I can only imagine how you felt when we all found out on Wednesday late afternoon that the Summer exams for Years 11 and 13 have been cancelled. This sudden announcement took us all by surprise and came as a huge shock, especially to our young people who have been working so hard in the lead up to exams and the end of their GCSE or A'Level journey. I decided that it was extremely important to communicate directly yesterday with these exceptional and incredible groups of young people, rather than just ask them to remain at home. I wanted to talk with them face to face, partly to acknowledge the very difficult reality of this sudden change, but also to share some of the really important positive messages that I hope will help them through.

Firstly, while we do not know what will replace the Summer exams, we do know the government has committed to ensuring that students leave with the qualifications they need to progress on the next stage of their journey. This signals that they do not intend to hold students back next year; that our students can continue to plan and prepare for that next step of their journey, which is extremely good news. And I assured our students that we of course share the government's commitment: we know what they are capable of and we have seen how much progress they have been making, especially in recent months. We share fully the government's commitment that our students will not be disadvantaged by being unable to sit their final examinations. We do not as yet have any information about how this will be managed and while I am sure you have many questions about that, I really cannot tell you anything more at the moment. I will of course keep you updated as soon as we have any further information. For now, the most important message to our young people is that they have our support at this time to make sure their future plans are not disrupted, however difficult the situation may be for the next few months.

Secondly I wanted to impress on our students that even though it appears their year 11 and year 13 education journey in school has come to an abrupt end, they are still very much our Colmers students.. None of us yet knows when school will re-open to students but I have promised our students that when the time is right, we will have the very best of celebrations with them to mark this stage of their journey. And I of course want to extend that to you as their parents and carers. You have been and remain a vital part of our Colmers family and we do not want to miss out on marking the transition of your young people through to the next stage of their education or beyond. It will not be what we had in mind at the start of this year but I can promise you it will be special!

I appreciate it was extremely difficult for many of our Year 11 and Year 13 students yesterday morning to suddenly find that this stage of their education journey has changed so radically. It may take some time for the reality to sink in for others. And it will have been difficult for you as their parents and carers to come to terms with the situation. We had intended to be continuing with exam preparation for these cohorts, clearly that is no longer viable or necessary. We are considering what we do as an



alternative to stay connected with the students and help them with next steps. Further details will follow but this will take us a few days and I will be in touch again next week to update you.

It is difficult to absorb the reality of the situation we find ourselves in and the changes we need to make so rapidly as the country mobilises to keep people safe during the COVID-19 outbreak. I know you understand that we are having to make decisions incredibly quickly as we receive new information daily and thank you for your continued support as we make the changes necessary to support our children and families in these unprecedented times.

Best wishes,

Emma Leaman
Headteacher