

COVID-19 Update, Mr Reynolds, Executive Principal, Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As we all prepare for another period of lockdown, I'm delighted to report that record numbers of our students have been logging on to their daily briefing at 8.30am then going on to their lessons. As I have said on numerous occasions before remote learning will never replace the buzz, energy and effectiveness of face to face learning in the classroom and we appreciate that it is difficult for a young person to keep themselves motivated and energised lesson after lesson, day after day. As best you can, please do make sure your son or daughter takes regular breaks (even 10 minutes here and there can keep their brain alert) and has a water bottle to hand. Do remember, if your child has any questions encourage them to either contact their teacher or Year Manager in the first instance.

Golden Moments - We will once again showcase the fantastic work submitted by our students with our "Golden Moments" posts on Facebook and on our website during the current lockdown. Please congratulate your child if their work is selected as the quality of submissions is always exceptional.

Learning Resource Centre - On a weekly basis, Miss Horth will be posting activities, ideas, puzzles etc to the Activities channel in Teams (<https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3a746ca558bac54687b444613e244a33cd%40thread.tacv2/Activities?groupId=e48ecfe9-8542-4b51-aca7-ed2318e6606a&tenantId=1d3d7354-55dc-4a7a-bdc1-82370fd85ac5>). One of the activities is a 'Word of the Week' challenge. Miss Horth is encouraging students to use the word (correctly!) in a piece of work that has been set either in a lesson or as homework. We'd be grateful if you could encourage your child to have a go - if they post a photo of their correct use of the word in their work in the Team (as a reply) Miss Horth will add a 'positive' in ClassCharts.

Student welfare - In these very strange times it's really important that we are all taking care of ourselves both physically and mentally. We are all dealing with being stuck indoors, working at home and not seeing friends or family never mind all the worries that the Coronavirus brings. Sometimes things can be a little overwhelming and it can be really helpful to talk to someone about how you are feeling. But we are also really aware that talking to someone the students don't know can be a little bit strange too! That's why we have set up a brand new service for students. If they would like to get in touch please use Ms Watts' new email contact counsellor@consettacademy.org.uk and she'll get back to you as soon as she can. The service is available from Monday to Friday 8.00am – 4.00pm. Any email sent outside those times will be answered the next working day.

It may be something big or small or maybe things just don't feel right, whatever it is please just get in touch.

Annual Awards Evening - Each year this takes place in December and is one of the highlights of the year. I know my colleagues and I look forward to the event and being able to celebrate our fantastic students' achievements. For obvious reasons we were not able to hold the event this year as we would normally but were planning a sort of blended Awards Evening this January, streaming it live to family

and friends. Due to the lockdown this is no longer possible at this time but we do hope to organise something as soon as our students return to school.

Student reports - Your child's report will be sent to you during next week. If you haven't received a report by the end of the week, please get in touch with us. This report focuses on the progress that your child has made in their learning and their attitude towards their learning during last term.

External examinations - Speaking in the House of Commons on Wednesday, January 6, Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, announced that due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic it is not possible to have exams this year. He confirmed that **GCSEs, A levels and AS level exams will not go ahead this summer**. Instead, he confirmed that Teacher-assessed grades will be used to award this summer's GCSE, A level and AS level examinations. He went on to say, *"While the details will need to be fine-tuned in consultation with Ofqual the exam boards and teaching organisations, I can confirm now that I wish to use a form of teacher-assessed grades with training and support designed to ensure that these are awarded fairly and consistently across the country."* It is with this final sentence in mind I would like to add two important points.

Firstly, we don't know what evidence the government are going to ask us to use on which to base teacher-assessed grades. We know it is unlikely to be just one set of assessments or one piece of work but a range. It is possible that we are asked for data sets or written proof of the grades we suggest. Prior attainment may be taken into account from GCSE or Key Stage 2. Whatever happens it is absolutely vital that your son or daughter keeps engaging with their lessons and assessments and, continues to build upon and consolidate their learning and understanding.

Secondly, education is not just about passing a set of examinations. We learn so that we can expand our minds, learn new skills and develop our understanding so that we can be prepared for our next stage in life whether it is a job, apprenticeship, training, vocational or academic study. For many of our Year 13 students it will be University. To stop engaging with the process of learning now or at any point before the end of the year would significantly harm your son or daughter's progression and life chances.

Perhaps without the spectre of examinations looming over them our young people can settle into a routine of learning for learning sake - for the fun of it, for the challenge of it.

I wish you and your family a safe and, hopefully, warm weekend.

Kevin Reynolds, Executive Principal