

# Queen Mary's Grammar School



## QMGS updates 13-5-20

Dear parents and students

I appreciate that the current situation has proved to be an emotional experience for some. Mr Reynolds has chosen to share a very personal account of loss and I am grateful to him for doing so. Our school assemblies are regularly filled with such honest and heart-felt addresses and I am pleased that the staff feel that they can still do this at such a challenging time. It is important that we show what a strong community we are in supporting people who are experiencing difficulties and loss.

### **A think piece for the week**

*A personal story by Mr Reynolds*

At the start of May, I lost my father over in Ireland. His long fight against Parkinson's finally caught up with him. This latest battle was one he could not win. The one that everyone of us will all have to face at some point. One of the consequences of the times we currently live in is that we cannot have a proper funeral. Covid-19 social distancing meant we couldn't bury nor celebrate his life the way we wanted to and how our forebears have done for generations. The Irish wake, where the living, the bereaved and the dead remain bound together, could not happen. Like the ancient Trojans looking after Hector's corpse, the Irish wake looks after the loved one with someone always staying with the remains, guarding against Hades throughout the night. We couldn't do this. An ancient and well-trodden way to grieve has stopped. The processing of grief has been altered. This is an additional cruelty of Covid-19.

I found myself having to social distance knowing that if I gave my mother a hug this could be our worst nightmare. I so wanted to give her the biggest hug, but couldn't. We kept our 2 metres apart, no mass, no gathering, with only 10 people by the graveside. I travelled from England to Ireland in a quiet overnight ferry trying to avoid all contact with people and surfaces to help minimise the risk of infection, explaining to customs at either end the purpose of my essential travel. The ferry was empty with only myself in a room that could seat 200 people. Alone I was, my wife and children unable to attend. The car doubled up as my bed at night, I could not stay in the family home. I brought my own food and lots of anti-bacteria wipes. The logistics of going from A to B across borders, trying to minimise risk, was a heavy additional burden. My sisters couldn't say goodbye to dad, one being in America and the other also abroad rightfully fearful of bringing an infection back to her own family. Another heart breaking angle to Staying at home, Saving lives.

Dad left this life peacefully, at home and in no pain. When the critical care team at home called us to say his time was near my sisters and I couldn't visit him. Normally, we would be on the first plane home. We couldn't hold his hand as he slipped away nor say our last words to him. All we could do was Zoom, in those final moments. At the funeral, we scattered and kept our distance. I couldn't carry his coffin. My sisters zoomed at the funeral. How times have changed, but it meant they got to see those precious moments that they wouldn't have seen otherwise. When he was buried, I went back to our family home and sat outside, alone raising *A Parting Glass* to his life. Mum inside, alone, too. The loneliest drink I've ever had. This was when we should have had dozens of people sitting around, remembering my dad, telling stories.... grieving. How Covid-19 has changed our world in many ways.

So what is this thought of mine? Apart from being unable to properly grieve due to the cruelty of Covid-19, my message is one of adapting to a changing world. This crisis will pass at some point, but our world will be different. By how much is anybody's guess, but it will be different. Having to do the unconventional, to change our habits, to re-think how we work, play or mourn is what is needed to keep our world ticking by.

My father, Kevin Reynolds, 1938-2020. **Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.**

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## **New DfE guidance and home learning**

I'm sure that you will have followed the announcements earlier in the week about the next stages of the national approach to lockdown. The DfE's guidance for parents can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

There appears to be an appetite for students to begin to return to school from June 1<sup>st</sup>, but this is aimed more at primary schools in the first instance. The guidance states that:

*“Secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges to begin [from 1<sup>st</sup> June] some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils, although we do not expect these pupils to return on a full-time basis at this stage”*

We don't know what this will look at this stage and there is a significant amount of risk assessment and planning we need to do before we even think about bringing students back in. My number one priority is the safety and welfare of staff and students. I will communicate when we know more.

This means that the emphasis on home learning will continue for some time and we continue to keep up our support via Teams and other online sources. It is important that students engage with this content and liaise with staff if there are issues.

## **QM Scholars**

- I am grateful to Mr Dryhurst, Mr Bradley and Miss Richards for putting a lockdown version of the QM Scholars programme
- QM Scholars is for the most curious and intellectually ambitious students of Queen Mary's Grammar School and it (or a version of it) is running in lockdown. If you are in KS4 or KS5, then you can join our MS Team using the code 3dzn80s. Once you have joined, you will have access to the reading material, updated week-by-week. The post function of the Team will be available to you to discuss, debate and ask questions about the ideas at play in the reading.
- The first seminar is convened by Mr Dryhurst and focuses on the philosophy of Kwame Anthony Appiah, a British-Ghanaian thinker who lectures at New York University. If you have an opinion on Brexit or multiculturalism, you should be interested.
- Please see the attachment along with this email

## **Free access to magazines and journals**

Mrs Walker in the school's library has signed up to a special offer, enabling students to have free access to 10 magazine titles (including back issues) for the following:

- BBC Music
- BBC History
- BBC Science Focus
- The Biologist
- Chemistry World
- Geographical
- Prospect Magazine
- The World Today
- Resurgence & Ecologist
- New Internationalist

To log in using your six-digit library card number please follow the steps below.

1. Visit our log in page: <https://exacteditions.com/login>

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2. Select the "library card" option in the top right-hand corner.
3. Enter your six-digit code (726171) into the "card number" bar and log in.

## Students in England encouraged to apply now for student finance

The Student Loans Company has confirmed that the application service will remain open to students as part of its response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and are encouraging students in England to apply for student finance as soon as possible to ensure their finances are in place for the new academic year.

New students are being asked to submit their applications before 22 May 2020. The Student Loans Company is contacting returning students to remind them to reapply for their next year's student finance. The deadline for these applications is 19 June. Applications for student finance can be made here: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

## Supervision of children with key workers as parents

We have continued to work with QMHS to provide this support, which will continue for those who need it over the coming weeks. I have written to these parents separately, but please do contact us at [enquiries@qmg.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@qmg.walsall.sch.uk) with any other questions.

## Free school meals

We have been contacting parents directly about the voucher system for those who qualify for free school meals. If you haven't heard from us, and you think you should have, please visit the school website: <https://qmg.walsall.sch.uk/students-eligible-for-free-school-meals/>

## Pastoral matters

Mr Collins, Mr Brown and the pastoral team have continued to make active contact with students who have identified SEND, safeguarding and other welfare needs. This will continue through the closure and please refer to the contact details in my letter dated 19/3/20:

[https://qmg.walsall.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020\\_mar\\_school\\_closure.pdf](https://qmg.walsall.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020_mar_school_closure.pdf)

An emergency safeguarding number is available on the answerphone if you call the main school number and lots of information is on the website:

<https://qmg.walsall.sch.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare-concerns/>

Mr Farnell is available from 2-4pm each week day on a school mobile (07849398033). This service is being provided for students who would like to talk to a member of the pastoral team with any concerns or worries that they might have.

## CCF

The CCF will be holding "virtual parades" through the CCF Teams site on Fridays starting at 4pm. Please follow their communications channel to find out about these.

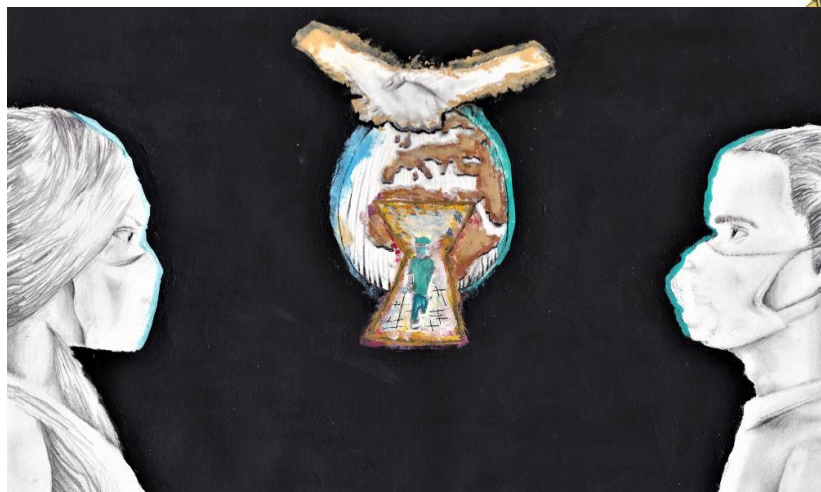
## QMA

Please don't forget the **Easy Fundraising scheme** – a great way of raising money for the school with very little effort during online shopping. Make sure you register, if you haven't already, at:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/queenmarysgrammar/>

## Final thoughts

Mrs Mcgranaghan has sent me some more pictures to include this week. I have attached three pieces of artwork entitled 'Social distancing'. Year 9 were asked to contribute one piece of artwork to illustrate this title. There were lots of good submissions, but Mrs Mcgranaghan has chosen the following work from Bilal Adnan, Ghayoor Hussain and Romi Sagoo for showcasing:



*Bilal Adnan*



*Ghayoor Hussain*



*Romi Sagoo*

# Queen Mary's Grammar School



With warm regards and best wishes

R. J. Langton



**Richard Langton**

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