

Queen Mary's Grammar School



QMGS updates 3-6-20

Dear parents and students

I hope that everyone managed to find some downtime over half term and that the students have settled into their studies this week. We are discussing and evaluating our approaches to online learning and hope to develop these in order to maximise the engagement of the students. More detail is included below on the arrangements for Years 10 and 12, but first a think piece from Mr Kolaric.

A think piece for the week

The inspiring story of the 'plague village' by Mr Kolaric



As a History teacher I am always looking to the past for inspiration; often trying to find links and connections with current times. We are indeed living through historic times at the moment; Boris Johnson referring to the coronavirus pandemic as the greatest challenge facing the British people since the Second World War.

In 1665 this country faced a similar challenge – the Great Plague. You probably know the story: rats, Samuel Pepys, plague doctors and the mass culling of cats and dogs. Whilst the epicenter of the pandemic was in London (as is the case today), there was another location that was devastated on an even greater scale. You have probably never heard of Eyam, a small but picturesque village in the Derbyshire Peak District, but the story of this place and the sacrifice its inhabitants made, provide us all with succor in this difficult time. I got to know this place well during my 14 years in Sheffield, at the university and teaching in 2 local schools. I spent a lot of time walking the Peaks and fell in love with the beauty and the story of this 'plague village'.

Read the story of Eyam's ordeal in 1665 here;

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35064071>

I'm sure you would agree that it is a remarkable and inspiring story. I'm struck by the following;

- The bravery and conviction of William Mompesson, who having recently arrived in the village brought it upon himself to persuade the villagers to isolate.
- The tragic and devastating impact the plague had on families like the Hancock and Morten families.
- The generosity of the human spirit: the surrounding villages and towns took it upon themselves to support Eyam as best they could.

So, whilst you are self-isolating at home with all the comforts of 21st century British life, spare a thought for the plucky villagers of Eyam who faced terror, uncertainty and death with indomitable spirit.

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New DfE guidance and home learning

As I mentioned previously, the new DfE guidance states that:

“Secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges to begin [from 15th 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”

Thank you to those parents of Year 10/12 students who have already responded to the surveys. These responses are helping us to build up a plan of how to best organise the support. This will not be a return to normal lessons and will be a complement to online learning, not a substitute for. All year groups will need to adapt to blended learning for the foreseeable future and will be using this term to evaluate the successes and drawbacks of online learning so far, in order to improve our approach.

If you are a parent of a Year 10 or 12 student and haven't completed the surveys, please do so below:

Year 12

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=E1T1PdfOSEuPbjC8TawIT3BJaE5hQ4BGiUJstzCZV9ZUOUNHVldMUEI5WDRSUDZHWjBTWDBYVEI1Vi4u>

Year 10

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=E1T1PdfOSEuPbjC8TawIT3BJaE5hQ4BGiUJstzCZV9ZUMVBBMKZVQ1BNS1JQU DM1N0YxTkZHWjZJTC4u>

I will write to Year 10/12 parents in the week beginning 8th June with specific instructions, but please be aware of the guidance given by the government, particularly with regards to dealing with symptoms, travel and social distancing:

Stay at home guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Travel guidelines

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

Social distancing for young people

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stay-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-guidance-for-young-people/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-guidance-for-young-people>

For Years 7-9 emphasis on home learning will continue for the summer term and we will maintain to 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.

The DfE have also published information, guidance and support for parents and carers of secondary school age children who are learning at home during the coronavirus outbreak.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-secondary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Internal exams for Years 9, 10 and 12

As I said before half term, the end of year exams will not be going ahead this summer term for Years 9, 10 and 12. We are currently consulting with staff and will be communicating more information about alternative arrangements as soon as possible, especially with regard to UCAS predicted grades.

Careers updates

- A) Next week (w/c 8th June) the Oak National Academy are hosting 'My Week of Work' aimed at Year 9 and 10 students. 'My Week of Work' comprises of 20 lessons which will support pupils to gain insight into the world of work through employer videos and resources. There will be also tasks set for pupils to complete each day to develop and showcase employability skills. The lessons will continue to be available after w/c 8 June 2020 via Oak National academy website. www.thenational.academy

As with all Oak National Academy lessons, pupils are expected to have a pen and paper to record learning and to make notes as they go through each session. A notepad or exercise book for the week's learning may

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be an ideal suggestion and it would be highly recommended to add their activities on Unifrog as an electronic record. <https://www.unifrog.org/>.

Additionally Mr Sunley is keen to track participation with these lessons and a dedicated Microsoft Team will be setup for pupils to record their progress and to post questions to Mr Sunley. Pupils are encouraged to screenshot the end of lesson quizzes and upload. An e-mail will be sent to Year 9 and 10 pupils with further instructions later this week.

- B) Alongside the Oak National Academy lessons a whole weeks' worth of content aimed at preparing young people for the world of work is available via Learn Live <https://learnliveuk.com/my-week-of-work/> where pupils will be able to choose from five key economic sectors in which to gain insight. They will hear from employers, learn about the businesses and complete virtual work tasks. The content has been developed in partnership with employers, school leaders and careers education experts. Again a notepad or exercise book for the week's learning may be an ideal suggestion and it would be highly recommended to add their activities on Unifrog as an electronic record. <https://www.unifrog.org/>
- C) In addition over the coming weeks Mr Sunley will be sending out e-newsletters to all pupils (Y7-Y13) with details of a range of careers activities that pupils can complete during the lockdown period. Already pupils in Years 11-13 have been completing virtual work experience opportunities and taking part in a number of webinars and activities provided by universities to support applications to higher education.

Library and literacy (Mrs Walker)

For those students who are fans of Dan Freedman, students can download a copy of his book 'The Kick Off' for free below. He is the author who was supposed to come to visit us in March and I know that lots of the boys were really looking forward to seeing him: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/9-12/dan-freedman-football-challenge/>

Please have a go at the book title emoji quiz:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=E1T1PdfOSEuPbjC8TawIT-85dAw3oH5LKiUOIQfMp5UOVpRUE1LWFdZVFI2TVVITzIwTVoxM01EVS4u>

Please also remember the two English-based competitions are running: the QMGS Reading Competition and the Foyle Young Poets Award, which were mentioned by Mr Dryhurst before half term. Both will give you the opportunity to win house points and to compete for your house. Information can be found via the Parents & Students tab on the school website.

Acting lesson opportunities for Year 7, 8 and 9 students (Miss Richards)

We were in the process of arranging a partnership with the Momo Academy of Drama before lockdown began. It was our hope that we could use the Academy's expertise to offer students the chance to study for LAMDA acting exams and to produce drama showcases.

As it is not possible for us to facilitate face-to-face lessons at the moment, we would like to share this flyer from the Academy (see the end of this email). They are offering online lessons to individual students or to pairs. If you would be interested in exploring this opportunity for your child, please do get in touch with the Academy directly. You can also find out more about LAMDA acting qualifications here: <https://www.lamda.ac.uk/our-exams/all-examinations/performance-examinations/acting>

Supervision of vulnerable children and those with key workers as parents

We have continued to support these children throughout half term and this week. From 8th June, all provision will be based at QMGS from 9am-3pm. This will not be in the form of taught lessons, rather providing a structured environment to continue with distance learning. The sessions are based in the Sixth Form centre and are supervised by our staff. Please do contact us at enquiries@qmg.walsall.sch.uk if you would like to use this service.

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Pastoral matters

We have continued our 'safe and well' calls across all year groups. 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://qmgs.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.

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

It is with regret that we have had to take the decision to cancel the annual Queen Mary's Club (QMC) Dinner in September. The QMC is our alumni association and provides a great deal of support for the school. I hope that we can hold other events, both on a social basis and in terms of careers support, during the next academic year. I was delighted to receive the following song, written by alumni Paul Walton, last week. I hope you enjoy as a little bit of fun to end this week's updates:

Poems of Place: Southridge, Horspath

The (Lonesome) Lockdown Blues

Am Dm7 E7 G
Another day of staring blankly in this room?
Am Dm7 E7 G
Even my glass of rosé fails to lift the evening gloom
Am G Dm7 E
There's been too little bandwidth and just too much Zoom,
Am E Dm7 Am
I think I've got the lonesome lockdown blues...

Are you getting bored with all those virus metrics?
And there's nothing left to watch on Amazon Prime or Netflix
My ennui extends to even You Tube's pet tricks
I've just got the lonesome lockdown blues...

My iPod has just finished its final rotation
The playlist had too many songs of un-splendid isolation
But it's time to lift the spirit of the Nation
Gotta get out...
Gotta get out...
Gotta get out of these lonesome lockdown blues

With warm regards and best wishes



Richard Langton

Headmaster

Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall

01922 720696

www.qmgs.org Twitter: @qmgs1554



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