

Queen Mary's Grammar School



QMGS updates 14-7-20

Dear parents and students

First word

As the year comes to a close, it is important to look back and reflect on what we have achieved. The past few months have been a huge challenge for everyone, but it has shown me the power of togetherness in dealing with adversity. The whole school has pulled together and I have been delighted to read and hear the feedback from staff after their correspondence with students and parents.

We hope that September will bring some normality, but it is now appropriate to rest and re-charge. The term ends today, so please be respectful of that in terms of correspondence with the school. Some staff will be back in school from the week of A-level results (w/b 10th August), but most colleagues will not be in school until Tuesday 1st September.

Staff tributes

I wrote tributes last week to a number of staff who are leaving the school and complete the list today with five more, who have joined the school in 2014 or before.

Miss Hussein joined us as a newly qualified teacher in 2014 and has made great strides as a teacher, producing consistently excellent exam results and enjoying positive relationships with her classes. She leaves us to take up the role of Head of Chemistry at Wolverhampton Girls' High School; a role I know that she will make a great success of. We wish her the very best for this new challenge.

Mr Larvin had the unenviable task of replacing the teaching of Mr Law when he joined the school as a NQT in 2012. He has flourished as a classroom practitioner and as the head of the Geography department. The results in the department have been consistently impressive and he has done much to enhance whole school teaching and learning. He has also held the position of Head of Aragon House. Mr Larvin has taken part in countless extra-curricular activities, including Farchynys visits, international trips and cross country fixtures, alongside his participation in the CCF. He leaves us to take up the role of Curriculum Design Manager at Teach First, one I'm sure he will make a great success of.

Mr Bryars joined the school at the same time as myself, in 2011, and has had a large impact on the life of the Economics and Business department. Witnessing his recent determination to complete the EPQ presentations (through his role as EPQ co-ordinator) during lockdown, I was reminded of his core drive to do the job well and for the best of his students. He has formed a successful partnership with Mr Sunley and the proportion of final year Economics and Business A-level students reading the subjects at university is testament to their approach. Mr Bryars has contributed widely to the extra-curricular life of the school, most notably in the Target 2.0 and Bar Mock Trial competitions, where he has successfully coached teams. He joins the staff at Concord College and we wish him well for the next chapter in his career.

Mrs Mcgranaghan joined the school as a student Art teacher under the wing of Mrs Wood in 2008 and has flourished into a highly effective head of department. The exam results of the department have been consistently outstanding over my time in the school and she has worked hard to promote the subject to the students and has undertaken a number of initiatives with local universities, artists and other organisations to exemplify careers pathways. The annual art exhibition, showcasing student work, has been a treat and is always well attended by the parents and students. Mrs Mcgranaghan has supported numerous other school activities and has run regular mentoring sessions and breakfast clubs. She leaves to take up the position of Head of art at Dixie Grammar School and we wish her all the best for her new challenge.

It's hard to sum up in a short paragraph the connection between Mr G Taylor and QM, given an association of over 30 years as a member of staff and as a student at the school. He has led the department since his arrival back in 1997 and the photographs in the entrance corridor to the sports centre are proof to a long and successful period. As

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well as successful teams and tours, Mr Taylor has been widely involved in promotion of sport, particularly rugby, across the town. The players featured in the team photograph taken before the annual Boxing Day match at Walsall RFC (between an old boys' team and the club) are a who's who of his CV. Mr Taylor also held the position of Head of Year for a large part of his time at QM and carried out this duty with care and attention. He has participated widely in school trips and visits, providing invaluable support to colleagues on foreign shores. He leaves the school to enter his retirement and we wish him and his family all the very best for the future.

A-level and GCSE result days

We will be shortly sending out letters to outline the arrangements for the GCSE and A-level results days. These will include details of book returns for the Year 11. We will be welcoming students on site, but there will be restrictions on movement and we will, where appropriate, stagger the issuing of results. We will be offering a digital follow-up service to queries about UCAS, careers, options and the results themselves. Please look out for these emails.

Planning for September at QMGS

As I said last week, we are preparing for the following in September:

- A return of all staff and students, with no rotas to be in place for students to be in at different times
- A change in shielding guidance from 1st August meaning that the vast majority of people can attend school
- An expectation that we deliver a full range of curriculum subjects
- The expectation of year group bubbles, the need for a zonal school approach and the staggering of the school day
- Contingency planning for a return to remote education if there is a local or national outbreak

I am extremely mindful of the following:

- Of the welfare and wellbeing of all staff and students in returning to school, some of whom won't have been here for nearly 6 months
- Emerging pastoral and SEMH issues connected to the crisis
- Curriculum gaps in knowledge and the need for support for some students
- The H&S implications of the return and the changes in expectations of hygiene, including implications on cleaners, toilets and the use of the canteen
- The issues related to the induction of new staff and students

As I have said, I will release full details, per year group, of the exact arrangements for September in August. This will include a one page summary sheet for each year group on the key information needed.

The following guiding principles will apply from Monday 7th September:

- All year groups will attend school each day
- Each year group will be a bubble and will not be able to mix onsite with other year groups; they will allocated a teaching zone within the school
- The basic 6 period teaching structure will remain in place for all students, with the allotted teachers per subject; not all lessons will be taught in specialist rooms and there will be restrictions on practical activities
- There will be slight variations in the timings of the day per year group, either starting at 08.45, 09.00 or 09.15 and finishing at either 15.40, 15.55 or 16.10 (the length of the day will remain the same); this is to stagger the arrival and departure
- There is a strong encouragement to avoid public transport and we would recommend walking/cycling alternatives
- Students will not be able to be on site outside of allotted hours, unless in an organised activity
- Students will wear normal school uniform, unless they have PE on that day; in which case they will wear their school tracksuit
- We will be comprehensively updating our risk assessment and school policies in readiness for the start of term, including guidance to parents on health and reporting suspected cases of Covid-19

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- I would encourage you to read the DfE's guidance to parents:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

Whilst the term dates for 2020-21 will remain the same, it has been decided across the MAT that the start of term in September will look slightly different to usual:

Mon 31 Aug	Bank holiday
Tue 1 Sep	Staff training day 1
Wed 2 Sep	Staff training day 2
Thu 3 Sep	Induction for Years 7/12 (separate guidance to follow)
Fri 4 Sep	Induction for Years 7/12 (separate guidance to follow)
Mon 7 Sep	First day back for other students
Wed 9 Sep	First MAT lessons for sixth form

This is to allow more time for the induction of new students at the beginning of term (as we have lost face-to-face options from the summer term) and also gives more time for staff CPD and planning.

The live calendar and the updated term dates are available on the school's website:

<https://qmg.s.walsall.sch.uk/school-live-calendar/>
<https://qmg.s.walsall.sch.uk/term-dates/>

Policy updates and risk assessment

As a result of the full re-opening in September, we are updating our risk assessments and policies. These will be clearly communicated and displayed on our website.

UCAS predicted grades

Thank you to parents and students who have sent me letters with regards to UCAS predicted grades since they were released on Friday. I have received a large number of these and they will be processed by September. If you haven't received an acknowledgment of the email from Mrs McCoy, please let us know.

iGCSE in ICT (Mrs Round)

Year 9 students who opted to enter IGCSE ICT this summer are shortly due to receive their grades. The grades will be given to students on their first day back in September. This arrangement is how the results have always been distributed, not an alternative arrangement due to Covid-19. We understand that they are anxious to receive their results as soon as possible, but we need to prioritise Year 11 on GCSE results day to best support them with their next steps in education. We thank you for your patience waiting a tiny bit longer for the results.

I say with real sincerity; I very much look forward to welcoming your son back to school in September.

Captains of House interviews

Following interviews with AGK and BBM, I am pleased to announce the following appointments for 2020-21:

- Deanna Makan – Captain of Houses
- Rayyan Hussain – Captain of Houses
- Dylan Sanghera – Captain of Media

Safeguarding update (Mr Collins)

We have been made aware of a Blue Whale Challenge that is taking place on Instagram amongst some students in Walsall. This is a disturbing challenge aimed at getting teenagers to self-harm. The game has 10 stages according to reports, with each stage encouraging participants to complete increasingly macabre tasks. It has a history of the challenges leading to the encouragement to commit suicide. This is very concerning.

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Please make sure you are keeping an eye on children's social media feeds and that they are not engaging in such challenges.

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

I finish this week with some good news from Mr Lichfield, who writes:

"I am pleased to announce the results of this year's Junior Maths Challenge which was held online for the first time due to COVID-19. 150 students from Years 7 and 8 took part with 12 gold, 38 silver and 51 bronze certificates being awarded. Of particular note, were Shiv Kang (best in year 7 with a score of 113/135) and Aidy Li (best in school with a score of 119/135)"

I wish the whole school community a restful summer break and look forward to seeing you in September

With warm regards and best wishes



Richard Langton

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