

Queen Mary's Grammar School



A message from the Headmaster, September 2020

First word

It has been a September like no other in my 20+ years in education. A huge amount of planning went into re-opening and we all wondered about how things would work out. On reflection, the staff and students have been first class in responding to the new routines and rising to the challenges. Life goes on and, whilst we cannot offer the full QM experience, it is brilliant to see students back in classrooms and teachers doing what they do best. We certainly hope that we return to normality sooner rather than later in the year, but I think we have all learnt something about new ways of working.

Although we have had to deal with confirmed cases (like most schools), I have been heartened by the compliments of the Walsall Public Health team, along with governors and the MAT, about our control measures. We have lost relatively few students to self-isolation per confirmed case and it is great to see the blended learning approach being adopted by staff and students alike.

We will thrive despite the challenges and we will do this together.

I do aim to revert back to a monthly summary email, but all previous correspondence from myself with regards to updates can be found on the [school website](#).

Staff tributes

It is usual for us to pay our farewells to staff at the end of the summer term, but the past week has marked the retirement of two very long serving members of staff.

Mrs Columbine (alumni Officer), 1978-2020

Mrs Columbine joined the school in 1978, as the PA to then Headteacher Sam Darby. Her history with the school, and knowledge of its former staff and students, is immense and it is with a tear that today marks the end of her 42-year association as a member of staff! Mrs Columbine will say that she has 'retired' a number of times already, after moving into a finance role in the mid-1990s and then to alumni officer in 2011, but nonetheless it is only right that we pay tribute today. I know that she has already received many messages from alumni since we made the announcement in the spring of her retirement and it is a real shame that the QMC dinner could not happen last weekend in order to pay tribute to her. I am grateful to her for all the support she has given me in my time at the school, being very patient when I haven't quite remembered the historical aspect behind many a QM tradition! We're sure that she'll never be far away, but we hope that she enjoys more time with your family.

Thank you, Mrs Columbine, for all that you have done.

Gill Diskin (Biology lab technician) 1994-20

Mrs Diskin joined the biology department in 1994 and quickly became part of the furniture at QM. She set about making a real difference to the workings of science at QM, becoming senior technician for a number of years. It is evident from a visit to the prep rooms that she has established routines over the past three decades that simply work! She has supported large numbers of staff and students and brought great stability to the department.

Mr Rockett added: "She has been an absolute rock of stability in the Science Department and has trained up both teachers and technicians too numerous to mention; she has always been a model of professionalism and has worked miracles for both staff and students".

We wish her well for her retirement and thank her for all that she has done for the school.

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Instrumental lessons at QMGS (Mr Vause)

It is very important that pupils stay in regular contact with their instrumental teachers via email, particularly where pupils are at home because of self-isolation. It is possible to set up on-line instrumental lessons so they don't miss out on their weekly tuition, but this is only possible if pupils contact their teacher to let them know when they are not in school.

Online learning and the use of MS Teams (Mr Kolaric Mrs Round)

We are continuing to adapt our approach to online learning and would be grateful if parents could complete a short [MS Forms survey](#).

It is important that students are in good working routines avoid sending/receiving messages late at night. We would recommend people change their notification settings. One in particular people might want to consider is having quiet hours set on their phone via the notifications setting e.g. <https://www.lync.se/2018/10/quiet-hours-in-teams/>

Well-being (Mr Collins)

The Student Welfare Hub is up and running and is adding value to our SEMH and SEND provision. The wellbeing e-mail address we used during lockdown is still open and parents or students can use this to contact the team on such matters: well-being@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk

Road safety and cycle helmets

You may have noticed the signs on the fence along the Sutton Road, asking parents to be considerate when parking and driving around the school. In particular, the signage requests:

- No parking in front of the school gates
- No 'U' turns on the Sutton Road
- No parking within restricted areas (including across resident driveways)
- No double parking

Please do comply with these requests and make the school a safer place.

On a related matter, I wrote to some individual parents last week, where their child was found to be riding a bicycle without a helmet. For your child's safety, it is paramount that they wear a helmet when riding.

For your information Rule 59 of the Highway Code states *a cycle helmet which conforms to current regulations, is the correct size and securely fastened must be worn*. Further advice on recommended clothing can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82>.

As I have said in my previous communications, I would like more students to ride bicycles to school, but this must be done safely.

QMA

I attach a letter on the work of the QMA for 2020-21.

Rackets Cubed Community Box Project - UPDATE Autumn Term (Mr Collins)

During the lockdown period in the spring and summer terms, we took part in the Rackets Cubed Community Box Project. This provided food parcels to families of children from the MAT schools who were in need of support.

Funding has been secured to continue the community box project until Christmas. The project is being run in conjunction with Rackets Cubed with the support of Black Country Foodbank and The Vine Trust. The

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additional support helps us to ensure a “balanced approach” to the contents of each box, hoping to achieve the aim of mitigating student food poverty in the Covid-19 pandemic period.

Parents can find out more about the organisation at their [website](#) and can email Mr Collins via the well-being@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk email account for more information.

Other School news

As a result of the current restrictions, we will not be able to run the Speech Day event as usual this year. We are currently planning a prize giving ceremony for closer to Christmas and will be running some in-school online sessions to commemorate the traditions of Speech Day in the week beginning 19th October.

Key dates for the diary coming up

The following are upcoming, which you may be interested in:

Thu 8 Oct Y11 parents' evening

Thu 15 Oct Y13 parents' evening

These will be run online and parents of students in these years will receive a separate letter

The live calendar and term dates for 2020-21 are available on the School's website:

<https://qmgs.walsall.sch.uk/school-live-calendar/>

<https://qmgs.walsall.sch.uk/term-dates/>

Thank you for your continued support

Regards



Richard Langton

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