

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you have all made it successfully to the end of this week. It has been a steep learning curve for everyone, but I would like to thank those parents who have taken the time to email and provide such positive feedback about the live teaching that has been taking place. It is a bit like trying to conduct an orchestra using a mouse and a keyboard, so the feedback from students and parents is much appreciated. Some of the things that have been said:

- *The excellent home learning you are providing is taking the pressure off our family and the tensions that can come with parents attempting to take on the teaching role*
- *The schoolwork being set since the Christmas break has been just fantastic*
- *The contact with my child's teachers this week has been extremely valuable*
- *This routine is beneficial for my child's mental health*
- *I am sure the workload on all the staff at Balshaw's is immense, so I want to assure you that it is not unappreciated or unnoticed.*

I am so lucky to lead a school with so many committed staff. Our office team have been acting as frontline NHS staff conducting Covid tests on all those in school whilst still staffing the office and taking calls. The IT team been solving issues and problems that no-one even knew were issues or problems until this week! Our TA and pastoral support staff have been providing supervision for our Key Worker and Vulnerable students in school every day and monitored attendance and engagement of all students. All our counselling appointments have continued online. Our site staff have never stopped working at any point and neither have our cleaners who constantly keep the building and all touch points clean. Teachers (many of whom are also having to home-school their own children) are working immensely hard, finding new tips and tricks for making live lessons work effectively as we go.

It has also been a learning curve for our students. Some have struggled to adapt their styles of communication to be formal and polite because they are in their 'online mode'. We have seen a huge improvement in this since Mrs Wilson's communication earlier in the week. It is still worth reminding your child that although the function to communicate in a lesson may be title Chat, it is not for chat. It is for asking questions or answering questions. There are plenty of other formats for them to chat socially and informally - the classroom when they are being taught is not one of them!

Over the next couple of weeks staff are going to be sharing with each other some of things that have worked really well so that we can employ them more widely in lessons. There is the ability for students to use virtual whiteboards, to use the like function as a way of answering quick multiple choice questions and many more strategies. As we become more skilled at working in this environment we hope that the online learning experience will get richer.

I was quite amused this week that in response to Gavin Williamson's statement that parents should complain to Ofsted if they were not happy with their child's education that Ofsted has received thousands of communications from parents stating how happy they are with the remote education that is being provided by their child's school (each one of which they have to respond to)! In fact, they have stopped reporting the number of these communications they have received. You might wonder if I would encourage you to continue the trend, but I couldn't possibly comment!

Thank you for all the kind words and the support this week. As I have said before, school may now be remote, but we are open and working hard to support you in any way we can. Please get in touch with your tutor, your teacher or contact us via enquiries@balshaws.org.uk

Have a good weekend.

Kind regards

Mr Steven Haycocks

HEADTEACHER
BALSHAW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)