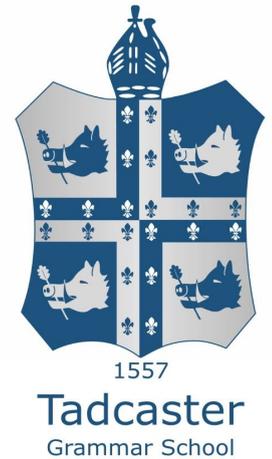


Be Your Best Self



Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers (& students),

It's been an interesting week. All my communication home this week has been very business orientated, so I thought I'd take this opportunity to reflect.

Firstly, on behalf of the school governors and staff I'd like to thank you all for your superb support over the last few days. I often write that all staff at TGS genuinely empathise with the pressures and challenges you must be facing in your wider lives at the moment. I am sitting here quietly worrying about my own (year 10 & 13) daughters at home alone today and what their futures will look like. It is definitely not easy being a young person or a parent at the moment. From a school staff perspective, our hearts sink just a little bit when we arrive at school and expect it to be fully open, but then sense the fantastic school community spirit which motivates us all to work towards our key staff value of 'Students Considered First'.

It has been heartening to receive so many supportive emails from our school community over the last week. Thank you. These really do have the power to turn a day into a good day. I'm often asked by parents 'what can I do to help?' In response, if you just send one member of staff a single line email to acknowledge their work this will definitely make their day, and probably their week. Staff email addresses are initial.surname@tgs.starmat.uk (e.g. j.brown@tgs.starmat.uk). Or use our school contact form: <https://tgs.starmat.uk/contact/> Most school staff have an email subfolder where they save positive emails from parents and students (I know I have one, going back to the 1990's). On dark days we access these folders and more often than not this gives us a much needed lift.

We've had to make some challenging decisions this week in response to government directives. However, at TGS we put our energies into practicality rather than politics. I do hope that you have felt well informed by the school. The written word is always difficult to get right, especially when government decisions have been made seemingly at the last minute. I also hope that our method of getting these key messages out to you as soon as we possibly can has suited your needs. We do keep an active eye on social media feeds to get your informal feedback and will be asking you to complete more formal feedback in the near future. I have never been a fan of 'trial by social media' and email 'table tennis' between parents and school. I'd like to think that if you have a query or concern that you have confidence in the knowledge that there will always be a human voice at TGS to talk to.



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Just a few updates:

Remote learning

I hope your children are engaged and motivated by their remote learning. If you have any queries, please approach your child's individual subject teachers in the first instance. This morning we held a virtual meeting with the Student Council to take their feedback and suggestions concerning our remote learning offer after the first 3 days. We will be writing to parents again soon to outline our remote learning offer in more detail and to ask for further feedback. Please bear with us.

Access to ICT

We are continuing to work to ensure all our students have access to hardware, wi-fi and internet access at home. If you have a query about connecting to any of the school's systems, please contact commsteam@tgs.starmat.uk in the first instance, and staff will assist with any issues relating to Google Classroom or problems with remote access in general. If students are entirely dependent on mobile phone data as a result of the lack of a fixed internet connection in the home, we may be able to help with data. A number of mobile phone operators have offered to provide data free of charge to assist with remote learning. If this is the case, please contact Mr Dunphy on m.dunphy@tgs.starmat.uk.

Many families now have a 'smart' television, and it might be possible to access school internet resources using the built-in browser that many of these TVs have. This might be useful if you have a limited number of devices and demand from a number of children. A cheap USB keyboard would make this even more feasible. If you are in receipt of free school meals, please contact Ms V Hubbard on v.hubbard@tgs.starmat.uk to discuss whether we can help you to access a keyboard if needed.

In addition, and although we do not endorse the source, this is a useful tutorial on how to use a games console (X Box/Play Station) to access Google Classrooms:

<https://ccyd.co.uk/learning-from-home-xbox-playstation>

There are a number of similar tutorials on YouTube if you wish to attempt this! We've tried it - it does work well.

In-school programme for vulnerable students and students with key worker parents

Our staff will have already been in contact with you about our provision and your requirements. Please could I ask you to remember that our capacity for this provision is limited. Our in-school provision is staffed by support staff as well as teachers. Teachers are concurrently planning and reviewing students' work as well as developing their on-line work. Support staff are also working on their core roles and a whole host of additional responsibilities related to student support and coronavirus testing in school. If the demand for in-school provision goes beyond a threshold (and/or if staff illness increases), the effect will be that the universal remote learning offer will be impacted as more teachers are called upon to staff the in-school provision.

Coronavirus testing in school

Our planning is progressing well and I will write again soon with details of how this will operate in school. This is an absolutely vital initiative to ensure we can all support the full reopening of the school at the

earliest possible time. Later today myself and my SLT colleagues are role-playing a number of scenarios in our developing in-school testing facility. Again, please bear with us. This is very new territory.

Temporary changes to the internal timings of the school day

To increase the effectiveness of support for students in school, we are moving to the following timetable timings from Monday 11th January. This will now be the school timetable for everyone whether in school or working remotely, apart from sixth form students for whom timings will remain unchanged.

Period	Timings
1	8.40 - 9.05
2	9.05 - 10.05
3	10.05 - 11.05
Break 1	11.05 - 11.35
4	11.35 - 12.35
Break 2	12.35 - 13.05
5	13.05 - 14.05
Break 3 (Well being break)	14.05 - 14.15
6	14.15 - 15.15

For students in school all food will be served during Break 2.

Assessment for the summer qualifications round

Not surprisingly, the ongoing government narrative on this has captured our attention. Now that we know that GCSE & A level summer examinations will not take place we are awaiting Ofqual to report to schools how students will be assessed. At this time (and probably for a few weeks to come), no one knows how this will take place. The moment I know, I will be writing to you again. In the meantime, all year 11 & 13 students should assiduously follow their remote learning programme.

I will be in touch again next week. Enjoy a well earned weekend if you are lucky enough to have one.

Kind regards from a snowy school site. I'm now off for my in-school coronavirus test.

Mr A Parkinson
Headteacher

KEY CONTACTS IN SCHOOL

	Year Leader	Pastoral Leader
Year 7 01937 837618 or extension: 218	Ms C Hodgson c.hodgson@tgs.starmat.uk	Mr D Bass d.bass@tgs.starmat.uk
Year 8 01937 837656 or extension: 256	Ms C Kenny c.kenny@tgs.starmat.uk	Ms J Hodgson j.hodgson@tgs.starmat.uk
Year 9 01937 837625 or extension: 225	Ms C Yewman c.yewman@tgs.starmat.uk	*NEW* Mrs N Weatherill (Mon - Wed) n.weatherill@tgs.starmat.uk Ms C Beal (Thu - Fri) c.beal@tgs.starmat.uk
Year 10 01937 837615 or extension: 315	Ms D Naylor d.naylor@tgs.starmat.uk	Mr J Fox j.fox@tgs.starmat.uk
Year 11 01937 837677 or extension: 277	*NEW* Ms S Buckley s.buckley@tgs.starmat.uk	Ms E Proctor e.proctor@tgs.starmat.uk

	Director	Pastoral Leader
Sixth Form	Ms R Knapton r.knapton@tgs.starmat.uk 01937 837623 or extension: 223	Ms J Gadsby j.gadsby@tgs.starmat.uk 01937 837635 or extension: 235

General contact with the school

Please ring Reception on: 01937 833466

Or use the following contact form: <https://tgs.starmat.uk/contact/>