

ADO

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Principal: Mr Andrew Downing

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Dear Parent/Carer and Year 11 Student

There are very few occasions in the career of a Principal when you know that you want to write to parents and students, but you cannot even begin to think of what to say to convey the immense mixture of emotions that people are feeling. Simply put, we are gutted to be in this situation.

I want to say that the young people in this year group are absolutely wonderful! In this time of complete uncertainty, one thing does remain certain; they will go on to lead incredible lives and make a huge success of their lives, simply because of the people they are and have become. I cannot convey my pride at how they have conducted themselves, at the care they have shown for others and at their unswerving determination to achieve for themselves.

At this moment in time, I am afraid that I can say very little about the situation with examinations. Wednesday evening's address by the Secretary for State and our Prime Minister stated only that exams are cancelled throughout May and June. We have been given no indication of whether this means they will rely on predicted grades, mock assessments or another method for overall certification. I can only think that this is due to the uncertainty of when schools may re-open and whether or not Year 11 will have the opportunity to return and work further on their studies. Another consideration is postponement until a more suitable time. In any of these scenarios and in the event of the school closures, we need to ensure that our young people do continue with their studies online at home. Should exams run in the autumn then this will help them continue to learn and prepare for this. Should we be expected to give predicted grades, then work done online will be included in teachers' judgments of this prediction.

Moreover, education is, and always has been about knowledge and learning and not just about qualifications. Continuing with learning at this time makes complete sense and will prepare our Year 11s for their future after school. We are working closely with our careers guidance providers and post-16 provisions to ensure as smooth a transition as possible to the next stages of every student's pathway.

You will already be aware by now that, with a heavy heart, we have followed guidance and postponed the prom until further notice. In these times of financial hardship for families, I do not feel that I can risk families losing any more money. I want you to know that I will do everything in my power to give these young people the best leaving experience and prom night possible, when we can in the future.

We have not said goodbye today. My staff are not ready to do this, I am not ready to do this and, most importantly, our young people are not ready to do this. We will make it special when we say our farewells in the future - a real event and opportunity to celebrate all that is exceptional about these students, their families and our wonderful community.

So this is not goodbye but stay safe, be kind, be happy and take care of one another.

Until we see you again, you are all in my thoughts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Downing'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a double underline under the final 'n'.

Andy Downing
Principal