



ABINGDON

From the Headmaster, Mr MJ Windsor, BA, MA

5 February 2021

Dear Parents

I would like to thank the parents who responded to our short 'pulse' survey about the School's online provision which was in the weekly mailing last week. It has provided valuable feedback that we are digesting and will share with staff.

Firstly I would like to say how much we appreciate the overwhelmingly positive messages of support. It makes a tremendous difference to staff motivation. However we are not complacent and parents have taken the time to suggest ways that our provision can be improved, and I assure you that these are being given proper consideration.

In terms of the responses to the survey, 95% of the 234 respondents were either 'very positive' or 'positive' about the remote working provision that is in place. The percentage fell slightly to 81% of respondents who were 'very positive' or 'positive' about their child's experience of homework.

The latter is difficult to get right. We are very aware of the amount of screen time that students are now faced with plus the temptation for further screen time out of school hours, as socialising is largely limited to online and the dark evenings make getting out after school more difficult. If you have concerns about the additional screen time due to homework then please do talk to your child's tutor. Teachers have been reminded to minimise screen time for homework for example by asking students to handwrite and then scan their work. Conversely, some parents were concerned that their children were not getting enough homework. We ask that you discuss this with your child as they may be squeezing homework in between lessons rather than having a break between lessons.

We also recognise the difficulties encountered by our international students who are remote learning in a different timezone. Teachers are very understanding of the challenges these students face and we ask that you get in touch with your son's tutor to raise any concerns as we understand the need to be flexible under these circumstances.

Many parents mentioned the positive effect of getting outside into daylight and fresh air. We are fully in agreement with this and the school day is timetabled such that on most days lunchtimes offer a long break with plenty of time to eat lunch and to get outside.

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The PE department has shared the sport provision for this term on the [Covid-19 webpage](#) and I would encourage students to engage fully with this and the range of Other Half activities on offer. All students should ensure that they get outside for part of each day, whatever the weather! Some parents have asked that the School sets further incentives for pupils to get fresh air and more exercise. The Sports department is already sending postcards to 'sports lockdown stars', so your child may be a recipient at some point. Families were very positive about the screen free afternoon last Friday and is likely to be something that we repeat should lockdown continue beyond the 8 March.

Some parents voiced their concerns over keeping students motivated and their mental health and wellbeing, particularly students in GCSE and A level year groups. We have considerable resources available to help with mental health and wellbeing. All students have access to Firefly where they can find these resources in the Wellbeing section. The school counselling service is also available throughout lockdown so please ask your child to get in touch if you have concerns, the email is school.counsellor@abingdon.org.uk and the counselling service will respond. Parents and students may also like to watch the [Managing the Mind](#) webinar where OAs, who are currently working within the field of mental health, talk about keeping well during difficult times.

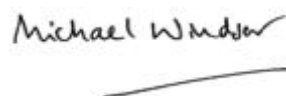
With regard to the Fifth Year and Upper Sixth we are reassuring students that we are monitoring the situation as to public examinations very carefully. We have asked, as far as is possible, that they leave the worrying to us; we know how important this year is to them and they are a top priority. We will be holding live webinars for parents and students once we know more of the government's plans for GCSEs and A levels and we will give the dates for these webinars once the government has announced its intentions.

Other areas that parents have asked us to consider are: further online social opportunities, increased use of breakout rooms for students to meet and chat and further 'get together' activities online such as baking and quizzes etc. All of these we will be looking into.

Finally I would ask that if you have lingering concerns about the online provision, and you would like to discuss this further, then please do contact your child's tutor so that we can look into it.

This lockdown is undoubtedly more difficult than last year's and students and staff are finding it challenging at times. However we do recognise that we are fortunate, the online provision is generally working very well and we have the resources in place for when pupils want help. Please encourage your children to ask for support if and when they need it.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Windsor". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Michael Windsor