



Marden High School

Friday 10th April 2020

Dear All,

I hope that this week has gone well for you all. I hope also that students have enjoyed some of the activities that have been suggested for this 'holiday' period, and that they have been able to achieve a good balance of activity and rest within family time. There are many resources available that are worth referring to for advice and ideas, and this is a good one: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

There are, of course, many events that have had to be cancelled, including school trips. Since the Foreign Office advised against going ahead with any overseas or residential trips for the foreseeable future, I am mindful that parents and carers will be concerned about the situation with regard to refunds. Unfortunately as all deposits and subsequent payments received for UK and overseas travel have been forwarded on to the travel companies concerned we are unable to make any refunds to parents and carers at the present time. We are working closely with North Tyneside Council who have advised that our insurers are considering claims on a 'claim by claim' basis taking travel time frames and government travel restrictions into account for both UK and Foreign trips. Obviously this is new territory for everyone, and guidance and restrictions are changing very quickly, meaning that the claims process will take longer and will be more complicated than normal. We have, however, completed insurance claim forms for all trips affected, and we will contact parents affected when we have news.

Sadly the Year 11 Prom has also obviously had to be cancelled. We are starting to think about plans to have a formal event of some sort, possibly combined with the Awards Ceremony, some time in the Autumn term. You will appreciate that the exact timing of this is uncertain currently, but rest assured some sort of fitting final event will take place.

Free School Meals vouchers were ordered for eligible families on Wednesday 1st April and

the order was updated on Monday 6th April following Michael Gove's announcement on Saturday 4th April that vouchers can now be issued for the two weeks of the Easter Holidays. We have followed up on our order a number of times by telephone, email and via their website, but feedback from Edenred (the company contracted by the Government to create the vouchers) is that they have been inundated with requests and there is a huge backlog that they are working through. Please rest assured we are chasing this up on your behalf, and we will get vouchers out to families as quickly as the Government's system allows. If you have a situation of extreme hardship caused by this delay please contact the school on office@mardenhigh.net

If due to COVID-19 you find your employment status changes and you believe you qualify for free school meals, please let us know so we can put in place measures to help ensure you are in receipt of a meal. So that this support is secured long term, please go to this website: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> and complete the process via the local authority website: <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/238/free-school-meals>. We will work with you to make sure you are supported at this time and beyond, as we try to keep all our community safe, healthy and secure.

The sunshine and the budding plants of the past few weeks have reminded me of the most recent assembly we had with Year 11, the one before we spent the afternoon together playing rounders on the fields, just before the start of the school closures. In that assembly the students heard a story, which might serve as a timely reminder that, whilst we are experiencing some challenging times, there is still so much beauty and goodness around us. As Lady Bird Johnson (wife of US President Lyndon B) once said: "Where flowers bloom, so does hope". Here is the story they heard.

A tramp, shuffling along a dusty road, noticed a large shiny rock on the ground ahead of him. He picked it up and saw that inside was a beautiful stone. So he took it to a jeweller and had it valued. As luck would have it, it was an enormous example of a rare and precious gem, which he then sold for a huge amount of money.

Now prosperous beyond his dreams, he continued his habit of looking down at the ground. Maybe he would find another precious rock. Then he'd be even richer! In fact he spent most of the rest of his life searching the ground for such another stone until one day he saw a shiny round object lying in the dust.

When he picked it up, he discovered it was just a broken mirror. Pondering this, he suddenly

realised that it looked so shiny and sparkly only because it was reflecting the most beautiful blue sky inlaid with fluffy, high white clouds. He looked up, and for the first time in years saw just how beautiful the sky was. In his endless searching for another precious rock, he had completely failed to notice and appreciate anything of the beauty and richness that was all around him.

Take care and look after each other.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M. Snape'.

Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher