

Dear parents, pupils and carers,

As November turns into December it feels like time for me to provide another update from KLA. I know parents will be watching and reading the news and seeing all kinds of educational debate going on, so it seems important to me that we communicate our interpretations of these as best we can. I also want to be able to provide reassurance about the quality of education at KLA during the most challenging of periods, and share my confidence in the amazing resilience of our wonderful KLA staff and brilliant pupils. So here goes...!

With three weeks of this term now remaining, it is important to reflect on the twelve weeks we have already safely negotiated. We have – either through luck or planning, or maybe a bit of both – been remarkably softly impacted by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Other than Year 10, where our small number of positive cases seem to have been concentrated, we have been very marginally affected. We have not as yet had to ask large numbers of pupils to self-isolate, school has been open throughout to pupils of all years and staff absence has been very low. All of which mean that we have been able to operate as close to normally as I would have dared hope. This of course does not mean that further challenging periods do not lie ahead still, and I will continue to need your steady support as you have given us up till now to continue to manage the fallout of the covid circumstances in the months to come.

One clear concern throughout, for parents and teachers alike, has been what negative impact there is going to be following the time out of school, either for the months of the first national lockdown or for those small groups having to self-isolate for two weeks at a time since. We have been assessing pupils as usual throughout the last month or two, and I am pleased to be able to share that we are **not** seeing grave negative progress as an impact. Our new Year 7 have taken some benchmarking assessments that are identical to those taken by Year 7 each year, and their scores are almost identical to those achieved by last year's Y7 cohort.

We have just completed a set of informal assessments too for Year 11 pupils, and again compared their performance in those assessments to those of previous cohorts – again we are seeing performance that is no weaker across the year group as a whole, and indeed early indications are that we may well be looking at record results from these young people in the summer.

These are very encouraging results for us, although that is not to say that every pupil has made similar progress – we have identified some pupils across the school who appear to have made less than average progress during the pandemic and we are working with those pupils now to try to address this issue. But overall, KLA appears to have managed the first lockdown, the full-return of all pupils and the rising numbers of cases pretty successfully and with limited impact on education. This has been because everyone has played their own individual part in our response, for which I am hugely grateful.

As we head into Christmas, we would normally be holding full exams for Year 11 in December and in all other years in January. For Year 11, we are waiting for further information from Ofqual and the Department for Education as to what the final exams will look like (we expect that later this week), and once we have this we will make our decisions on how and when to hold our first formal mock exams. They will not be until well after Christmas, so our Year 11s who have worked so hard this term can at least enjoy a rest over Christmas. As I say, once we have clarity on how the exam system will work for Year 11 this year we will discuss our approach to those at KLA and I will be in touch with Year 11 pupils and their families again to explain what it all means before Christmas. Exams in all other year groups in January will not take place this year, and we will continue informal and class-

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based continuous assessment. Currently I do hope to be in a position to hold formal, end-of-year exams for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in the summer term as we usually do. We are now working on providing our first virtual parents evening for Year 11, which will take place throughout December, with other year groups to follow after the New Year. Again, I will share more information at the time.

We continue to do all we can to keep KLA safe for all staff and pupils, and I am so grateful to staff who have quickly mastered the basics of Microsoft Teams and are now streaming dozens of live lessons every day to those studying at home. Where this is not possible (and there are still occasions where technology is not our friend!), work is always set on Go4Schools for pupils to complete. We do still have a few laptops for those pupils unable to access these on anything bigger than a phone, please do let us know at the school if you would like to apply for one for your child.

After Christmas I hope to have some exciting news to share about KLA's future development, which will be a nice change from writing bulletins entirely based around the 'C' word! I am so proud of the way our school and its entire community have risen to the challenges posed throughout 2020, and really am beginning to look forward to the days to come when 2020 is a rapidly-receding memory!

I hope this update is helpful to you – as always if you have any further queries please do let me know by emailing alan.fletcher@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk and I will do my best to provide answers.

Alan Fletcher