



Friday 17 July 2020

Dear Students

For most of you, this is your last day of term – but please spare a thought for those GCSE, BTEC and A level students of Geography and PE who will be coming in next week. My hope is that this letter will be read by some of you as young as 10, or as old as 18.

I wanted to write to you today to say farewell for a few weeks, leave you with some thoughts and also share some information about September.

History Isn't In The Past

When I was a kid, I was surrounded by older people who talked about being involved in historical events that seemed so distant and ancient to my young mind. I can recall listening to soldiers from the First (1914-18) and Second (1939-45) World Wars, grandad telling me his life in New York in the 1930s, or my parents describing their own childhood in the black and white world of the 1950s. When I was your age, older people used to say: "Everyone knows where they were when they heard about the assassination of President Kennedy". All of this made me feel that everything of importance in world history had already happened and that the world in which I was growing up in was a bit boring in comparison.



I am now one of those older people. It is now my turn to tell young people like you about those things that happened in my lifetime *before you* were born. I vividly recall small things like the first colour TV (1979), microwave (1983) or personal computer (1983) in our family home. I recall seeing a car phone in a big posh Jaguar in about 1984 and thought I had wandered into a James Bond film.

And then there were the Challenger space shuttle and Chernobyl disasters (1986), the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism (1989-91), the release of Nelson Mandela (1991), the death of Diana, Princess of Wales (1997), the start of two Gulf wars (1990 and 2003) or the '9/11' attacks on the Twin Towers (2001).

Your parents and carers can also remember where they were when they heard about the Challenger disaster (I was helping my dad decorate my bedroom), the death of Princess Diana (getting up to play football one Sunday morning) or the attack on the Twin Towers (teaching some Year 11s). The world keeps turning.



History Is Being Written Now

Fast forward to today, 2020. Here we are in one of the most unusual events in world history. We are in a story whose ending is unknown, but we are the central characters in that tale and like all epics with great characters, we all have our own personal story within the bigger drama of the pandemic and the lockdown.



Even though our individual stories are different, we are all united by the same central narrative of how the entire world faced a major threat and turned to one another to get through a crisis. We have seen and read a great deal about the superb work of our NHS. But there has also been millions of others, key workers, who have continued working to ensure that the country's food, energy and medical supplies can continue.

Our government created a furlough scheme to avoid mass unemployment, teachers flipped to teaching remotely, students flipped to learning remotely and finding out what it is like to have their parent or carer as their tutor, teacher, headteacher and inspector all rolled into one. As schools and businesses have gradually reopened, we have witnessed how quickly we have all adapted to patient queueing outside stores, hand sanitiser, social distancing and face coverings.



In history lessons, students are often asked questions like what was it like to live in Tudor England, Victorian Britain or Nazi Germany. We always warn students that they need to be careful when asked such questions. They must never fall into the trap of thinking that everyone shares an identical experience of any moment or era in history. We are all very different.

We All Write Our Own History

The past six months shows us that we all have our own stories and memories of 2020. Some have had a really tough time whilst others have been fine. It is also normal for us all to have mixed feelings and memories about the lockdown. Most of us will have had great days *and* some rotten days. This is why

we cannot simplify our experiences to a 'yes' or 'no' answer when asked if we have coped with the lockdown. Let us assume we have all had good and bad days – just like real life!

History Is Written By Those Who Were There

And so, I urge you to take a step back for an hour or two. Reflect on the past few months and ask yourself how this global event has affected you. What will you remember about this year? Talk about this within your family and amongst your friends. Write it down or use your smart phone to record yourself describing what it was really like because we all tend to forget the details of our past and simplify our stories when asked many years later. In twenty or fifty years there will be many new youngsters who will want you to tell them about that time in 2020 when the whole world joined together to get through a really difficult period. When that as-yet-unborn youngster asks, you need to be ready to tell them your story, play them that recording or watch that video. Before you switch off for the summer, make that written or digital record whilst it is all so fresh in your mind.

Looking ahead to September

No doubt, you will be curious about September and will want to know what school is going to be like. At the end of this letter, I am going to do my best to set some of that out for you. Towards the end of August, I shall write to you and your family again because I will be in an even better position to give you much more detail about all aspects of your return. There are going to be some changes, but the school is going to be very, very similar to the way it has always been and always will be. Please read on to find out more.

We are always getting ready for your return and have so many plans in place to make sure your lessons are great and that we can all work together to make every single lesson count. More than ever before, we have to remember that we are in this together. School secures your future and like any guaranteed investment, the more you put into it the more you will get out.

And finally...

Time to switch off now and relax for a bit on your own and with your family and friends - I am planning to start doing that next week once the final session for Year 10s and Year 12s are over. I have a bunch of Netflix and iPlayer programmes I am looking forward to watching. I shall go on lots of runs with my dog and have three books I cannot wait to read. I am not going away on holiday and instead look forward to getting out and seeing more of our own beautiful country.

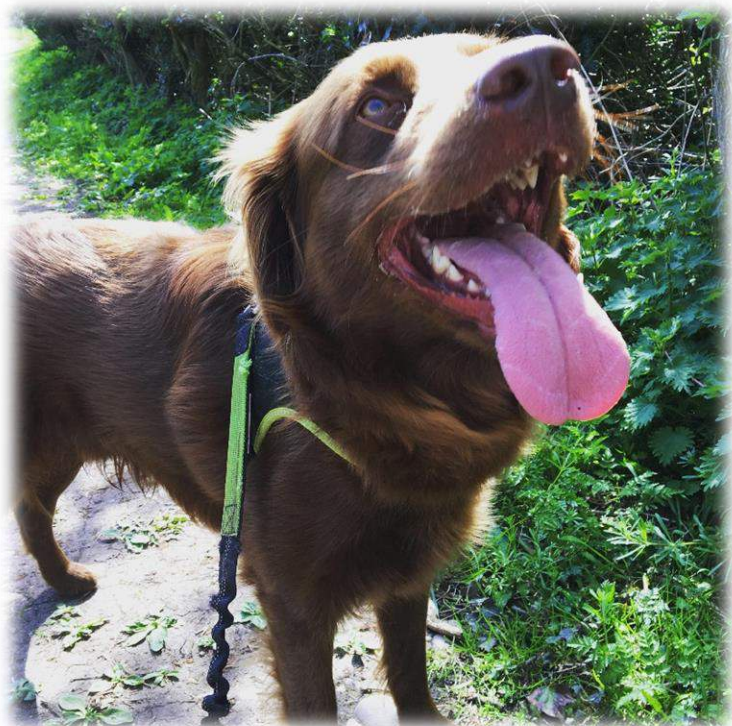
Whatever you choose to do, choose to do it. Do not drift from one day to the next – make every day different so that your memory of 2020 is in fact a mosaic of many memories, each depicting the vast range of thoughts and feelings we have all had since March.

Be safe, be happy.

Yours faithfully



Mr Doherty
Headteacher



A Brief Summary of Our School in September 2020

Towards the end of August, I shall write to you again and set out more detailed information on your return to school. In the meantime, I believe the best thing to do would be to summarise what will be the same and what will be different next year.

<i>What will be the same?</i>	<i>What will be different?</i>
<p>✓ The school day will still begin at 8:40am for everyone. There will still be a registration period at the start of the day, followed by five one-hour lessons.</p>	<p>✓ We are probably going to finish at 3:15pm so that you have more time to move between lessons. Each year group will be allocated one external door through which every student in their year group must arrive and depart.</p>
<p>✓ You will have breaks between lessons.</p>	<p>✓ You will probably have three breaks each day, each one lasting 25 minutes.</p>
<p>✓ Your timetable will be completely normal: 25 lessons per week with all the normal subjects and range of teachers. Just like before, you will be with different students in different classes and options.</p>	<p>✓ Rather than you moving around the entire site to go to your teachers' classrooms, your teachers will be moving around school to deliver lessons to you in your year group zone.</p>
<p>✓ You will still have all or some of your 'specialist lessons' in the normal rooms or spaces: art, computing, dance, drama, design and technology, music, PE and science.</p>	<p>✓ The majority of your lessons will be in a suite of classrooms or 'zone' set aside for students in your year group. If you have a specialist lesson, your teacher will escort you out and back into your year group's zone.</p>
<p>✓ You will still be able to use the toilets, run around outside and have open door rooms during break times.</p>	<p>✓ Depending on which year group you are in, you will be assigned your own toilets and social spaces so that each year group can remain separate.</p>
<p>✓ After school clubs and activities will continue.</p>	<p>✓ These will begin no earlier than Monday 21 September and will probably have to be with members of the same year group only.</p>
<p>✓ All back to normal with how we all dress in September. Please study the guidance booklet on our website.</p>	<p>✓ We will probably be allowing you to wear your PE kit into school on a day that you have PE (to avoid crowded changing rooms).</p>

You will notice that I have not referred to a number of other things, like school buses or the canteen. I am still waiting for answers to a whole bunch of questions and will be able to provide more clarity in four weeks' time. In the meantime:

- Apply for bus passes in the normal way;
- Please bring in a healthy packed lunch during the first week of school.



CHIPPING NORTON
SCHOOL

