

Dear Year 11

20 March 2020

The most challenging letter of my career

I literally don't know where to start. Despite some very late nights and very early starts recently, I have deliberately put off writing this personal letter to you all until the very last minute. I have used a few avoidance tactics, including spontaneous music sessions in the dining area today, but time has run out, and I'm due an assembly.

I am totally devastated for you all. It is desperately unfair what has happened to everyone in the country, but it is especially unfair for you, with the cancellation of your GCSE exams.

But we all have to play our part to protect front line health and other workers, and save lives. There is no bigger calling. And I know you will all understand, however raw and hurt you feel right now.

I have only been working with you since July, when we became Outwood Academy Normanby, but wow have I seen you fly in that short time! Every single day I am in awe of how resilient you are, and how quickly you have risen to the challenge of a new school, with new expectations, and the demands I and teachers have placed upon you. Your determination to do well, despite the difficulties in the past, has been nothing short of inspirational. I know I couldn't have done what you have, when I was your age.

In all the schools I have led, I have never seen in the first year, so many numbers of Year 11 turn up for voluntary after-school Enrichment, for extra 1:1 and of course those 7.30am Revision Breakfast sessions! You have been relentless. You have inspired your friends and peers to get stuck in too. You have modelled to younger students what it means to work hard, and to be kind. I am so proud of you!

I can say very little about the GCSE examinations at this time. All we know is they will not happen. Please be assured that we will support you whatever. I desperately hope we are only closed for weeks, not months, and that you can return and we'll carry on pushing you with study, revision and more mocks! That will provide the best evidence of how hard you have worked, to secure the GCSE grades that you thoroughly deserve.

It is important you continue to work and revise at home, using the Google Classroom and all those Revision Books I bought you. That was in September. Where has the time gone?

Remember education is much more than qualifications. You are fantastic people who have learnt over time the power of working with others, of demonstrating leadership, of being confident in your abilities and being positive for the future. The world is a better place because of you, of what you will achieve, and the difference you will make to those around you.

I have not yet rung Gisborough Hall regarding the Prom in June. We don't know yet what is happening. Whatever does happen, I WILL ensure you have a proper Leavers' Assembly and Leavers' Breakfast (with shirt signing, prizes and much more) alongside a Leavers' 2020 Prom to be proud of.

We have not said goodbye today. My teachers and staff are not ready to do this, I am not ready to do this, and neither are you. Let's say our farewells in the future when everyone can be here together.

Stay safe, look after each other, and keep in touch, in the weeks ahead.

Andrew Wappat
Principal