

Dear Parents,

Hello again!

Having our pupils and teachers back in School this week has been brilliant and we all sincerely hope that this is the beginning of a “return to normalcy” (GCSE History students should recognise that quotation!).

Another maxim, this time made famous by Churchill is “business as usual”. That is certainly how it felt when I went around the school on Monday morning. The M5 Ceramicists were working assiduously on their sketchbooks, Mr Millard was putting his U5 Maths group through their paces and Mr Gonsalves was discussing great political scandals with his Lower Sixth historians. Pupils seemed in good spirits, finally liberated from remote learning. Similarly, today, I spent an hour in the Nursery with Mrs Exley’s class and had fun learning about their model-making, marble runs and Mother’s Day preparations.

Frustrating though the last couple of months have been, we now have to look forward - and there is lots to look forward to. GCSE Drama practicals are on the horizon, sports and music activities after school are resuming and the assessments that are replacing public examinations are not too far away. Then (dare we dream) we may even have the pleasure of a reasonably normal summer. Fingers crossed!

A Testing Week

My thanks to the staff who organised our Lateral Flow testing arrangements last Thursday and Friday and this week. The process worked extremely well and we have conducted over 1,000 tests – about a 90% take up rate. The emphasis from now on will be in terms of home testing – kits are available from the School.

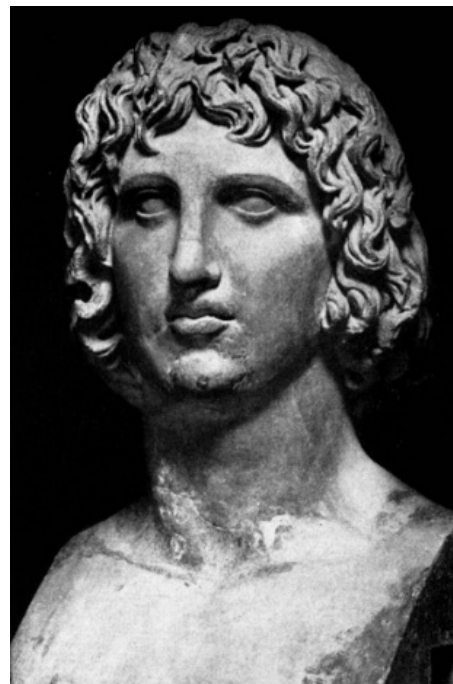




Classical Success

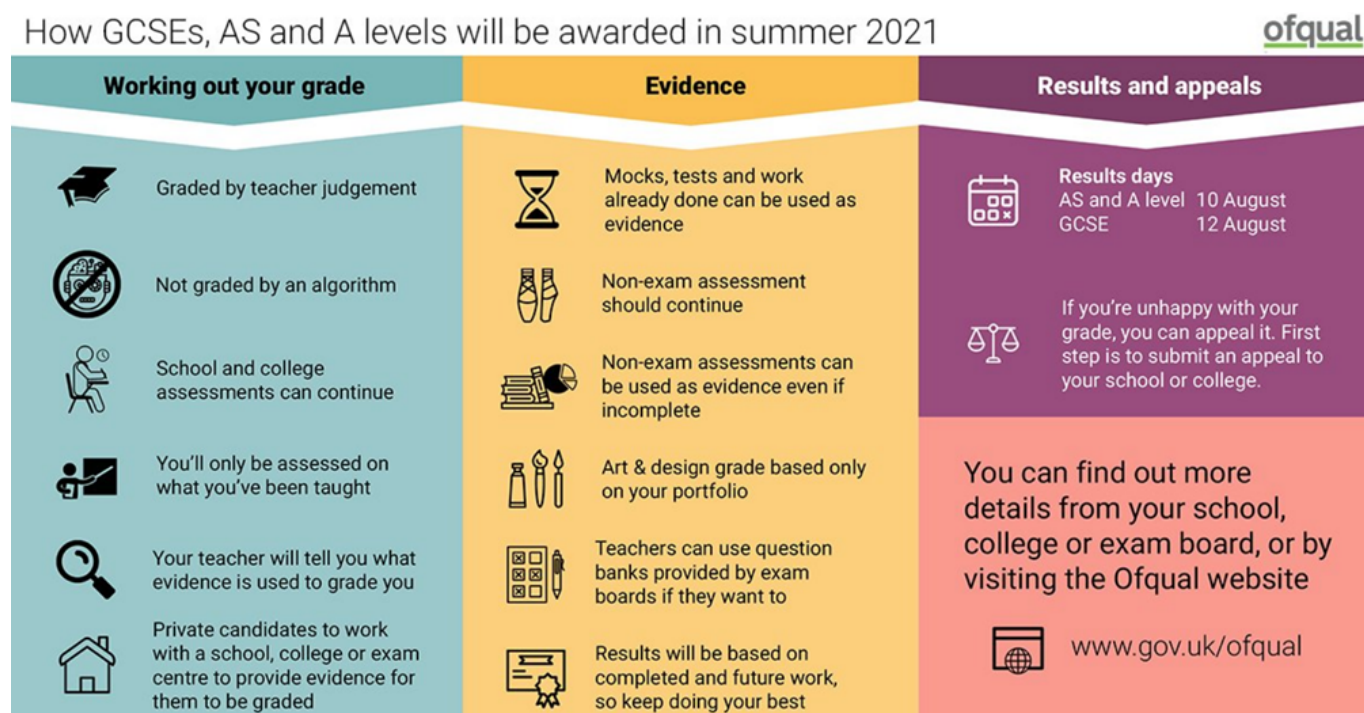
Many congratulations to two of our classicists who have performed brilliantly in the annual Association of Latin Teachers Reading Competition. Isobel Wanstall (U6) was Highly Commended in the Senior section and Thomas Young (L5) won 1st Prize in the Junior section.

Isobel had to read a piece of Virgil paying attention to the hexameter rhythm as well as pronunciation and meaning (Our Head of Classics Mrs Heavens describes this as “insanely difficult”!). Thomas gave a confident, accurate and highly expressive reading of a passage from The Cambridge Latin course. The awards are richly deserved and underline the ability and commitment of our pupils in an academically demanding subject. My thanks as well to Mrs Heavens for her inspiration and skilled leadership of classical study at St Edmund's.



GCSE and A-Level Webinar

On Tuesday we ran a webinar for parents and pupils in examination years to explain how the school will calculate Centre Assessed Grades this year for GCSE and A-Level. My thanks to Dr Sotillo, Mr Mount and Mrs Blench for leading the discussion. We are still awaiting final materials from the Examination Boards and will contact everyone once the final arrangements are confirmed. The following infographic provides a useful summary:





Music News

On Monday afternoon, four Upper Sixth A-level musicians enjoyed a workshop given by our Performance Consultant, John Harle. As we are approaching the time when their recordings are normally made, it seemed fitting that Matthew Bawtree, George Burton, Fred Rupp and Chiara Shearn enjoyed some detailed instruction before their exams are finally recorded. Normally, these sessions would be face-to-face but the new format on Teams seemed to work pretty well for the 90-minute session. Good luck U6!



Mr Payne also tells me “after school ensembles began this week and it was an absolute pleasure to be making face-to-face again. Lunchtime groups start next week. In addition, thirty ABRSM candidates have now completed and submitted their Performance Grade online music examinations, and we wish them all the very best of luck. Results should be issued soon. Trinity Digital Grade candidates will be recorded in the next two weeks, followed by an ABRSM online music theory exam nearer the end of the month.”

“East Kent Schools Together – The Big Sing”

Members of our Upper School Junior Choir and a selection of our L5 singers had the opportunity to get creative last Tuesday afternoon with a virtual choir session organised by EKST and hosted by experienced local choir director, Lemon Otter. Around 50 pupils, representing St Edmund's, Spire, Dover Christ Church and St Anselm's, were on the call. The session began with a recorded introduction from Gareth Malone, before we were launched into a short section of fun and energetic warm-ups. After working through three songs ('Edge of Glory', 'Somewhere only we know' and 'Roar') students showed their competitive side with a quick-fire Kahoot quiz on pop music.



Future of Education Technology

When I was at school, we had one computer and only the Headmaster was allowed to use it! Times have certainly changed. Last week, I was delighted to join a panel discussing the future of Edtech at an event hosted by award-winning educational strategist Elaine Walker-Cunningham. It was an interesting discussion that addressed the impact of remote learning (both in terms of learning technologies and the impact on pupil wellbeing), the application of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in educational settings and possible future directions for curriculum, assessment and teacher CPD.



Seminar: Dr Tina Rae “Understanding and Managing Anxiety”

On Friday last week (before all pupils and staff returned to 'onsite' life) all staff were encouraged to watch a wonderful presentation by Dr Tina Rae on *Understanding and Managing Anxiety*. The timing seemed ideal as all staff and pupils prepared for the change back to a face-to-face learning environment. Tina gave staff practical advice about how our pupils will be feeling and strategies that would help them.

The webinar focussed upon how we continue to support children and young people with anxiety in the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond:

- Defining anxiety- what does it look and feel like
- Developing practical approaches and techniques for supporting children
- How to answer 'anxious' questions
- How to model effective thinking
- School phobia – linked to the pandemic/other emotional needs – top tips for supporting transition back to the classroom
- Specific strategies to try – anxiety ladders, apple technique, worry box, problem solving, challenging and breaking cycles of negative thinking and using positive thinking/self-talk



Sports News

PE and Games sessions are up and running again this week. Our coaches from Chelsea FC Foundation were back on site putting our aspiring young players through their paces:



Mrs Millard, Head of Sport reports...

"It's been so lovely to have our pupils back in school this week and sport has been full steam ahead. A sunny Tuesday accompanied junior games with the L5 in particular impressing with their enthusiasm. Thursday's weather was less kind, with a good degree of rain shower dodging in evidence! However, the atmosphere amongst our senior pupils was terrific and many were delighted to have the chance to exercise with their friends once again. Our after school clubs started with girls' netball and boys' hockey, and the Chelsea FC coaches returned to provide an excellent session on Goal Keeping for the L5. The Unity Fitness strength and conditioning coaches provided excellent sessions this week too, with the start or resumption of fitness journeys! Although fixtures are not on the cards just yet, we would encourage all our pupils to come and have some fun at after school clubs, not least for taking advantage of the social interaction that this provides."





Alumni News

Former St Edmund's pupil Adar Poonawalla (Baker, 1991-9) has been in the news this week for the extraordinary work done by his company in the fight against COVID 19. You may have seen [this](#) article.



Have a great weekend!

Kind regards,

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