



14 August 2020

Dear Upper Sixth Form Parents,

I write to you the day after what is always an emotional day at school – for all sorts of reasons and for all of us – and there is still plenty to do. This year is unprecedented, of course, and, given the nature of things (and contrary to my normal process), I thought that you would like an early update from here.

It is never straightforward to provide a blanket message which reflects the experience of all boys and their families on results days – by their very nature, some pupils get exactly what they had hoped for, and others do not. Some are delighted and others are devastated. As a school, our feelings mirror those of the boys; delight for some and genuine upset for others. Results are individual, therefore, rather than collective, and so any summary carries large caveats; and it has never been more stark than this year, when exams were not even sat.

We have spent yesterday (and now today) helping boys (who did not gain automatic access to their preferred university course) to get good university placements, so far as possible. As a collective, we ended yesterday in a broadly similar position to most years on this front – we have not yet crunched accurate numbers, and indeed some boys are still making their final choices for next year, but it feels like a similarly high number of Russell Group admissions and admissions to other good universities as we normally get. However, the disappointments are sharper this year, in a year when the boys have had no shot at an exam. We have received a number of requests for appeals - again, not unusual, but this year somehow they carry a more remote opportunity: the exam boards have made it very hard to appeal successfully. For example, individuals cannot use the appeals process for challenges against centre-assessed grades. As a school, we can appeal whole subject cohorts and (if the process allows, once it is announced) we can make appeals against mocks – so we intend to take stock over the next few days (whilst the mock appeals are being sorted out by Ofqual) and gather evidence carefully so that we are in the best possible position to make the appeals we need to. The process of appeal and response takes a long time and, as things stand, does not appear to be a high percentage option, but we will throw everything at it if we feel a boy might receive a better outcome. We all feel extremely protective of the boys, not least this year, and we all want the very best for them.

The management of the qualifications process north and south of the border, in the last few days in particular, has sadly shown little regard for the well-being of young people, or indeed anybody involved in their upbringing. We, however, know the boys and we are proud of them and all they have achieved, academically and otherwise, in the years they have been here. These boys are a wonderful group and, whatever happens in the coming days and weeks, they have a strong and exciting future ahead of them. We hope that their university places, and the other pathways chosen, ultimately enable them to continue to shine; and we will look forward to staying in touch with all leavers in due course via the ever-vibrant OB club.

I will give you more information about the university (and other) outcomes for this year group in the next few weeks.

With kind regards indeed

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Hodgson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Hodgson
HEAD MASTER