



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I decided to sleep on what the Prime Minister said last night, in the hope that a new day might bring fresh inspiration and a letter full of lucid answers; but I am sorry to say that I have none just yet. This is such a frustrating time for everybody, and I feel desperately sad for those who were looking forward to a New Year with considerable optimism and high hopes for school – and not least, of course, for those in exam years, who will be understandably anxious. None of us know how that will play out yet; and all I can do is to ask, please, for a little patience whilst we work through the ramifications of all this. I will stay in touch as and when things develop.

For the moment:

- Online lessons will start today and continue for the foreseeable future. Exam years will continue their learning in earnest for now, as if they were taking exams this summer (which, if you examine the PM's words – and if you take into account IB and iGCSE – is not entirely impossible).
- Overseas boarders who are back – and still coming in – will also be learning online, but it was a sheer delight to see about 30 of them in breakfast this morning. They were happy, chatty and clearly pleased to see one another; they brought a smile to the face and life to the site.
- Children of key workers are in and working from school (another 30 or so). It is good to be able to do that; and we enjoy having them with us, too.
- This morning I emailed to the Upper School boys a spoken assembly on “coping with uncertainty” prepared before last night's announcement but all the more apt today. In it I highlight that the coming weeks will not be an easy time for many people, and therefore encouraged them to listen to the assembly; and maybe to act on it. The vast majority of my assemblies are posted on the website and, if you like, you can read this morning's content [here](#).
- Thank you so much to the many of you who volunteered to help with lateral flow testing: it was a wonderful response. Obviously, this will now be on hold for a while, as we reassess – we are currently looking at the possibility of some low-key testing onsite in the coming days for the few staff and boys we do have here. I hope you do not mind if we get back to you in a few weeks, therefore, if we need to roll it out in large numbers then.

There will be a number of Harpur Trust, Governor and Management team meetings in the coming days, not to mention Government updates, and I will try to keep you suitably up to date, but without clogging up inboxes too much.

For now, all of the usual avenues for communication are open; and I wish you well for the term ahead.

Kind regards

**James Hodgson**  
Head Master