



Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

Headteacher: Sunil Chotai, BSc

26th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 10 and 12 students,

I hope that this letter finds you all in good health.

It has been a pleasure over the last few days to welcome back our Year 10 and 12 cohorts for their face to face support sessions. The students coming into school have been superb, they have been mature, sensible and very mindful of the awkward situation we find ourselves in; the responsibility that they have shown has been much appreciated.

It was good to talk to a few students in a bit of detail about their experience of being away for so long, how they have managed remote working and how they have coped with the lock down. It seems, from many of these conversations, that nearly everyone found the experience unsettling, many used words such as “strange”, “peculiar” or “weird” in their descriptions of how it felt to be back and of the recent period in their lives. Nonetheless, it seems that the students have managed both school closure and national lock down very well, at least as well as can be expected. I know that parents and family members have had a big hand in this; providing encouragement, support and the odd nudge and prod to progress school work as required. So my thanks to the students for managing this “peculiar” time well and to the families for their constant support.

It seems to me that despite this considerable loss of time with formal school based education we can be optimistic; our students have the capacity to address any shortfalls and gaps that may have arisen - if they are prepared to work with focus and determination as we go forwards.

It was interesting talking to a few students about how they had coped with the work set by their teachers and the barriers that they had faced. Several mentioned to me that it was sometimes difficult to get properly motivated to complete all the work set. In the absence of a daily routine and the supportive conversations from their teachers it was awkward, they said, to find a proper sense of purpose in each day. This is understandable, but this will also be the difference between those who come out of this period unscathed in terms of future chances and those that are seriously disadvantaged. It is crucially important all students try as much as possible to be motivated and dedicated to their learning.

Understanding this and doing something about this is going to be the challenge for our Year 10 and 12 students from now on; how can you find good motivation and sense of purpose at a time when there is so much uncertainty and when so many are feeling unsettled? This is a matter of being resilient yourselves, being determined and drawing appropriately upon support from the family and school.

My advice to all our students, which I will reiterate here, is:

1. Try and develop a good working routine at home that you can stick to – undertaking at least 4-5 hours of school work each day. Try to stick to the school day as far as is possible, so a couple hours of work, and then a break and so on.
2. Join in the MS Teams lessons that your teachers are organising – this will help you to keep in touch and focused.
3. Don't worry too much if you are not managing all the work set. Don't be complacent but don't be over anxious either, there will be opportunities for you to catch-up.

When I wrote to you last outlining the face to face support provision for Year 10 and 12 I said that the sessions beyond 25th June would be subject to a risk review. This risk review has been completed and because the sessions so far have worked well I can confirm that the following sessions will now go ahead as originally outlined.

Year 10 students:			
Session E	8 th July	Year 10 (Q half) Science	9.30- 11.30
Session F	10 th July	Year 10 (P half) Science	9.30- 11.30
Year 12 students:			
Session E:	30 th June	Year 12 Option C subjects	9.30- 11.30
Session F:	2 nd July	Year 12 Option C subjects	9.30- 11.30
Session G:	7 th July	Year 12 Option D subjects	9.30- 11.30
Session H:	9 th July	Year 12 Option D subjects	9.30- 11.30

Year 10

Going forward staff from all subjects will continue to set work for Year 10 students up until 9th July. The period 10th July up to 17th July will be set aside for students across the school to use to catch up on work missed or not completed. This will provide respite for those that have lost ground and assist with student wellbeing.

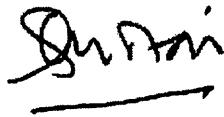
If your son or daughter has fallen behind with work completion then it may be wise to spend some time in the summer break catching-up as well.

Year 12

For Year 12 members of staff will continue to set work up to the last day of term. Some members of staff will need to set work for the summer break as well, particularly if progress in their subject has been slower than anticipated.

Can I finally thank all parents and carers and students for their support during this awkward period. The national ambition, as explained by the Prime Minister, is to open all schools fully from September. We are currently making plans for this and we are hopeful that this will become a reality and that our school will once again be the vibrant, happy place it was when all students were in attendance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunil Chotai', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Sunil Chotai
Headteacher