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2nd August 2020

**Academic Year 2020 – 2021**

Dear Parents,

As we are all so acutely aware the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause major disruption across the globe. The number of reported cases is rapidly racing towards 20 million and a number of countries/regions are reporting a second wave of infections. Here in Oman, over the last six weeks we have seen a large increase in reported infections, although thankfully this number now seems to be decreasing.

One area that remains a topic of global conversation and the source of endless questions is education. Will schools open for the new academic year? If schools do open, will all the students be allowed to return? If student numbers are limited, what year groups will return? What will social distancing look like? Will there be a normal timetable/curriculum?

Although, and like all schools in the country, we are waiting for further advice and guidance from the Ministry of Education (MOE), this has not stopped us planning for a number of different scenarios and possible variations. The main ones are outlined below:

**All students are allowed to return to school under strict social distancing protocols**: In reality this seems the least likely scenario. Nevertheless, should all our students be allowed to return, the school will have a complete set of health and safety protocols in place that will be shared with our community in due course.

**Students will be allowed to return to school in restricted numbers:** Until such times as we get more guidance from the MOE relating to this possibility, this is undoubtedly the most difficult scenario to plan for. Nevertheless, we have constructed a timetable that would allow students to receive a balanced programme that would incorporate on-site learning (following social distancing protocols) coupled with e-learning.

**All students continue with e-learning:** As stated in my letter at the end of last term, should we be required to continue with this format, we will be making a number of changes to the way we organise and present our e-learning, that will incorporate a variety of formats including more ‘live’ lessons for all age groups.

In addition, and to further support our teachers, students and parents, we have been working throughout the summer break on the continued development of our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – FireFly. The parent portal has been further developed (more details will be sent to parents from the Head of Secondary and Head of Primary in due course) and we have decided to expand the use of this portal to include Primary.

I am also delighted to report that the majority of our new staff have made it to Oman and are presently undergoing the mandatory 14-day quarantine. I am confident that their experiences will bring a great deal of ‘value added’ to the school, irrespective of the format that the programmes are delivered.

I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the IB Class of 2020. Although they were forced to complete the last few months of the course through e-learning, they did so with a high level of commitment and maturity, and I am pleased to say their efforts were duly rewarded with some excellent scores and an overall pass rate of 93%. We are now eagerly awaiting the IGCSE results that are due mid-August.

As we prepare for the start of a new academic year, there is little doubt the present situation remains fluid, but I am confident that the school will be able to adapt and change to best meet the needs of our students.

If you have any questions, suggestions or would like more information about the new academic year, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Glenn Canterford

Principal