



Head's Up!

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are well and that you are looking forward to the Christmas holidays.

This will be the final Heads Up! of this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support. It has been a year with many challenges. All of which were overcome with the spirit and resilience of our students, staff and community.

End of Term Arrangements

Please see my previous parentmail sent out yesterday for detailed information.

We are now finishing this term on Thursday 17th December at 3.10pm. This is a half day earlier than calendared. The school will be closed to students on Friday 18th December.

Symposium

Symposium is John Mason School's unique offer for raising the aspirations and challenging the students that wish to explore their subjects in more depth. Our Symposium is inspired by the modern interpretation of the word describing a coming together of a like-minded group of people to debate and discuss a particular topic. In our case, we are bringing together students in John Mason School to engage in something extraordinary. The symposia will include sessions led by class teachers and professionals in a variety of disciplines, ranging from Astronomy to Physical Education. Please look out for details of the upcoming application process in the near future.

Year 11 Trial Exams

Please note these have been moved by two weeks. They will now take place between 4th February to 12th February. This will allow more time for students to be as prepared as possible and will also allow extra time to work on feedback from the previous trial exams.

Foodbank Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated food to the Abingdon Foodbank. The response has been overwhelming. We made the delivery to the Foodbank today. Your support is greatly appreciated more than ever before.

Wellbeing (From Mrs Prior)

We have recently conducted a wellbeing survey across all year groups including JMF6. We had 799 responses (75% of students). The results will help us to identify areas for intervention and support and have been shared with tutors for further analysis.

I thought it would be prudent to share a few of the key points with parents regarding the issues that you may be able to support with at home:

- 24% of students aren't getting the required amount of sleep for an adolescent (at least 8 hours).
- 14% of students rarely, or never exercise.
- 93% of students are having too much 'screen time' National guidelines are 2 hours recreational screen time a day. (ParticipACTION). 49% stated that over half the time spent on screens is on social media.
- 47% of students aren't drinking the recommended amount of water each day.

The above statistics may have a detrimental impact on the concentration, decision making abilities and general mood of some students.

71% of students experience anxiety, with 34.5% of students experiencing anxiety either often or every day. Of those students, most were unable to identify what causes the anxiety. Students should be aware that, most of the time, anxiety is a normal human emotion, and that resilience to feelings of anxiety is something that can be learned through sticking to routines and facing the things that make us anxious rather than avoiding them.

GCSE Options (From Mrs Rogers)

It is that time of year when we start preparing our year 8 students for the options process. This is when the students get to make key choices about some of the subjects that they will study for the next 3 years. As with many of our usual activities this year, we cannot run this process in the traditional way, but we are excited to announce that we will be holding a virtual event which will give you all of the information you need to support your child in making these all important decisions.

During the first week of January we will be releasing the options booklet on the website. This will outline for you the process we will undertake, the courses we offer and the details of how each subject operates. On January 14th we will be opening the virtual event which will include a presentation by me, as our curriculum lead, along with individual videos from each subject outlining their course. This is a great opportunity to sit with your child to understand together the possibilities they are considering and to select their subjects.

Marking and Feedback

We are aware that the nature of marking and the way in which students are given feedback has changed a lot in recent years. Some parents have been asking questions about how students' work is marked and there are some common themes here:

- How do I know what mark/grade a particular piece of work got?
- How do teachers give feedback to students other than writing in red pen?
- How do I know that my child is getting effective feedback?

To help understand these issues and the kinds of feedback your child can expect to receive in school we have written a blog explaining the main ideas and the feedback strategies we use. We hope that this will help answer some of your questions, as well as to continue to work at home to support your children with their learning, which we know is very important to you and to them.

Please find our blog for parents here:

<https://altreflect.wordpress.com/2020/12/07/reflecting-on-marking-and-feedback-a-blog-for-parents/>

Staffing

We say farewell to Mr Dutia and Mr Hornby. They have made a fantastic contribution to JMS in their short time here. We wish them all the very best for the future.

We welcome back Miss Barnes to the maths faculty from maternity leave.

We also welcome Ms Marcus (English), Mr Waddleton (English), Mr Chambers (subject lead for Music) and Mr Peatfield (science technician).

Finally, I am delighted to inform you that Ms Neville has been appointed as our lead for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

I know that Christmas will be difficult in many ways this year and certainly not the same as we have previously experienced. Thank you again as parents for all you have done to help get us all through the year.

I do hope though, that you and your families have a wonderful and restful Christmas and I do sincerely hope to see you all again sometime in the New Year.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Rees', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Best wishes
Adrian Rees
Head of School

