

Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

1 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Parents Evening

Unfortunately, with the current COVID arrangements in school we are unable to host our calendared Year 13 Parents' Evening on site. We are very aware that this is a crucial time for Year 13 students and that parents may wish to hear directly from subject staff as to how their son or daughter is doing. Therefore, over the next couple of weeks teachers will be communicating with the parents of the students they teach to give a quick update on their progress, and some advice as to what the students should be doing in preparation for their mock exams in January.

Reports

After the mock examinations, teachers will be writing more detailed reports about the students' progress. Having seen how students perform under examination conditions, and assessed their examination technique, teachers will have a better indication of what each student needs to do to improve, therefore the reports you receive should be very helpful and enable you to support your son or daughter in the build up to the end of year examinations. The communication you receive from school in the next couple of weeks is therefore designed to be a short interim overview and a brief summary of advice prior to the mocks, with the more detailed comments coming in the reports issues towards the end of January.

UCAS

The vast majority of Year 13 students have completed their UCAS applications while a handful have chosen to take a gap year or apply to Higher Level apprenticeships. The UCAS deadline is looming. Students must submit it by the start of the last week of term at the very latest in order for staff to have time to enter references and do the double checking so that we can meet the UCAS deadline in mid-January. There is insufficient time to do all this in the first week of the Spring term, and students should have the application out of the way so they can focus on their mocks.

Universities are reporting a significant drop in European and International applications which may lead to them reducing their entry requirements for our

students as they need to fill their places. They also report that as their staff are working from home it is taking longer to process applications so they have changed some deadlines. Universities have pushed back their deadline for giving offers to students to **20 May** (rather than March) which in turn delays students having to make their final two “Firm” and “Insurance” choices from the offers they have received until the **10 June**. This might allow them to visit the universities if the COVID situation has abated.

UCAS would also like to know if a university puts pressure on students to pick them. For example, if the university communicates that accommodation will be filled up quickly, but if the student chooses that university as a firm choice, they will be guaranteed accommodation. UCAS disapproves of this implicit pressure selling and wants to know who is doing this. We have been asked to report which universities approach students in this way as they wish to stop it as an unfair practice.

Mocks and Revision

We appreciate that it is hard to have mock exams after Christmas but doing them in January does give us time to work with the students on improving their grades during the Spring term. Students should know that all these skills are vital to gaining higher grades:

- practising past questions: applying their knowledge to the precise wording and requirements of the paper will improve their marks.
- showing off their knowledge: revising and using lots of detail; being precise and specific with examples and in their workings and explanations
- spending time explaining and analysing: developing direct links to the keywords in the question

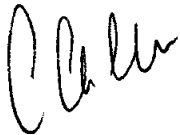
Please also remind them to break their revision into manageable chunks, with frequent breaks. Sitting for hours in their room does not necessarily lead to effective revision. Exercise, fresh air, healthy food and lots of sleep are crucial, as is having a good time at Christmas.

Most importantly of all, please help your son or daughter keep everything in perspective. Remind them that they should do their best but if, at the end of the day, it doesn't work out as they dream, there are always other pathways which will still

lead them to a successful and happy life, just via an alternative route. And, there are still almost six months to go, so they have time to make an impact on their final grade.

I hope you and your family have an enjoyable build up to Christmas, and that the holidays go well, despite the revision they will have to fit in.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Eales-White', written in a cursive style.

Claire Eales-White

Assistant Headteacher

Head of Sixth Form