

The Reader: Our message to students: We are still here for you

Friday 24th March 2020

After weeks of rumours, it should have been a huge relief to hear that schools were closing. As teachers, we were all well aware that our kids are ideal carriers for this virus.

Instead, the staff room was tearful. The bonds created between staff and students are very real. No home is perfect, and the pastoral support and structure of the school day are literal lifesavers for many children.

We're reeling over the exam cancellations. So much work, hope, care and energy has gone into preparing for those. Universities will need students in September, but we're left with a lot of questions.

We are now set up with a webpage, optimistically called a "virtual learning environment". Some colleagues are Skyping their classes and report good attendance. I'm hoping to see the kids' creativity at work; I can't wait to see Romeo And Juliet acted out via a TikTok dance.

In the end, and as ever, we will have to do our best to keep up with them, and hope that they can reach out to us when they need us.

Maartje Geussens, Francis Holland School, Sloane Square

Editor's reply

Dear Maartje

While so much gratitude is rightly being directed towards NHS workers at this difficult moment in our national life, it's imperative that we shower praise on the selfless work done by teachers and education staff too. Thank you.

You've had to adapt by essentially reinventing the wheel for teaching in a matter of days. No one should underestimate the logistical challenge of attempting to keep a skeleton school open to support other key workers while trying to teach children remotely. I know from speaking to other teachers that tearful scenes have been plentiful in the last two weeks. Saying goodbye to children you've helped raise for years takes an emotional toll. So you deserve huge praise for both finding and highlighting some cheer at a disruptive and upsetting time.

Who wouldn't love to see Romeo And Juliet acted out via a TikTok dance? If that ends up on the AQA exam syllabus, I dare say it would be an improvement.

Samuel Fishwick, Features Writer