

26th March 2020

Dear Parents

Fairness in Fees

Thank you for your co-operation and continued support of your school over the last couple of weeks. I am writing to tell you about our approach to fees and, in particular, next term's fee notices.

Over the past week, the world has changed significantly. Across the country, every family, every business and every organisation is adapting to the new economic and social realities of life in the UK. In this unprecedented situation, I am very conscious that you will be facing substantial pressures and challenges yourself, and so heads and staff are immensely grateful for the support that you as parents have offered them.

I know how hard staff have been working across our independent schools to ensure that pupils continue to receive an excellent education, albeit from home rather than in the classroom. Plans are fully in place for this to continue into next term and for the duration of these temporary restrictions – however long that may be.

Whilst this time of instability and concern continues, I want our schools to offer families strong, consistent and high-quality service so that, amidst all the other worries we are all facing, you have certainty and reliability in your child's education. I also want to ensure that the integrity and moral purpose at the heart of our organisation are evident in what we are asking parents to pay for and what you actually receive.

Continued education provision

I am writing to you today, therefore, to inform you that your fees notice for the summer term will only request core tuition fees (and exam fees where applicable) at this stage. The Direct Debit payments due in April will only collect payments for this.

We are confident that the core education provision that your child is receiving at home is of the highest quality and we believe that our schools are offering substantial added value at this time. However, we wholly accept that aspects of the overall experience that you value and pay for in attending an independent school are currently inaccessible due to children being unable physically to attend school.

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We will therefore be waiving boarding fees for next term for boarders who will not be able to access these facilities. We will likewise not be charging for nursery provision where the wraparound care that parents pay for is not replicable by us at home. We will be reviewing expenses and removing any extra charges which relate to services which will not now be received.

Keeping the position under review

As we gain greater certainty as to how long the current situation will last and when school buildings will fully reopen, we will continue to keep everything under review. Whatever the timescale, we need to keep our schools financially viable by meeting our fixed costs and paying staff, who are continuing to work hard for pupils. And we must be in a position to guarantee the future of each school so that, when partial closure comes to an end, we are able to deliver exactly what you have expected in the past.

However long the current 'lock down' arrangements last, we will also be working hard to make financial savings in all areas where you are currently not receiving a full service. We are also looking at all the options available to us through government support and will access these wherever possible. It is our intention to pass back to parents in autumn term bills all savings we are able to make through the coming term.

Exam fees and other expenses

We do not yet know the full detail of how GCSE and A level grades will be awarded in the absence of exams. I am in conversation with DfE, Ofqual and the awarding bodies (exam boards) to ensure that our schools' voice is heard as this detail is decided and to do all we can to make sure that our young people receive the grades they deserve.

We do know, however, that we need to enter young people for the appropriate exams in order to ensure that they receive grades. At present, the awarding bodies have not changed the exam fees they are charging and so we need to pay these fees in full. They are therefore included in bills.

However, there is recognition from the awarding bodies that these fees cannot stand as they are. I expect that once the detail of this year's system is decided, new exam fee levels will be set and we will get a substantial refund. We will pass any refund back to parents in full.

We are not including other expenses in this set of bills. We will now be looking at each additional expense that was set to be collected for next term and will consider the fairness and practicality of charging for each one. We will still charge for services that your children have received but have no wish to charge parents for services that your children do not receive.

We will write to you in the coming weeks with an update on which additionalities we are able to remove fully or in part. Those that remain will be added to your fees notice for September.

Financial hardship

We are aware that many parents are also facing temporary financial difficulties which may impact on their ability to pay this term's fees in the normal time period. We will be doing everything we can to support families in such circumstances. If you do find yourself in these circumstances, please do contact the email address shown on the top right of your bill and then a senior member of the school team will be in touch with you to discuss what options are available.

We all want our schools to open in full again as soon as possible and to welcome back all those families who are currently part of each school's community. To achieve this is realistically going to involve compromise on both sides; we need to ensure you have full confidence that you are getting value for money and only paying for what you are receiving. We likewise need to protect the financial security of each school, pay our staff and give your children an effective education from home and then, when we are allowed, a fabulous experience back at school.

Thank you for your patience, tolerance and support for your school at this time.

With very best wishes



Sir Jon Coles
Chief Executive