



9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we approach the end of our first term, in what has been a challenging start to this academic year, I wanted to reflect on all that has been achieved. Our staff and students have been incredible in the way that they have approached the new ways of working with resilience, flexibility and grace. It has been an absolute privilege to lead the school during this time and to see our students continue to thrive, despite the circumstances. They have continued to embrace all of the opportunities on offer this term and some of these are outlined below:

### **Isca Anthology**

We have begun our Isca Anthology – a tutor reading programme that has engaged both students and staff alike. One tutor said of the programme: “It is overjoying to see how quickly a book can enthral each and every student in a matter of seconds. As soon as the reading begins I know that the students are engaged, intrigued and lost in a whole new world - it's magic really!”

### **Millionaire Readers**

Two of our Year 8 students have read over one million words already this year by successfully reading many books and completing quizzes using Accelerated Reader. This is truly amazing! Well done to Rosie Hughes and Matthew Bowers.

### **Year 11**

We have begun a successful Period 6 offer for our Year 11 students where they are targeted to attend Maths, English and Science sessions. The attendance and commitment from our students has been fantastic. Our Year 11 students have also successfully completed their mock examinations. Well done to you all. Our Mock Results day will be on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

### **Powderham Live**

7 of our students have gained places in this year's Powderham Live event. Rianna Beer-Truesdale, Felia Ie, Mya Stevens, Jake Traynor, Alice Hodge, Violet Howson and Mabel Jones. These students had to send off video recordings of themselves to audition that were then watched by a judging panel and all of the students from Isca that auditioned gained a place in this year's event! The students are now undertaking a coaching program in the areas that they would like to work on, such as confidence and song writing. These coaching sessions are an online catch up with the mentors such as ex-student Sadie Horler and Aj Courtenay who began the Powderham Live initiative. There are plans to film the students performing in the castle during the month of January and then hold a live event at the end of January or in February. It is a really exciting and unique opportunity for our students and we are incredibly proud of them all.

## **Performance platform and Winter Whirligig**

Following the success of the lockdown performance platforms, we recorded a half term performance platform that was shared with each tutor group during the last week of the half term. Our KS4 students, who lacked a little bit of confidence but are really talented, were targeted to take part in this one; they were all amazing! Here it is: [https://youtu.be/B3p6Bi\\_TKwE](https://youtu.be/B3p6Bi_TKwE)

Our online Christmas Production, *The Virtual Winter Whirligig*, will be streamed on the Isca Exeter YouTube page at 6pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. See the attached poster.

## **Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme**

This year has been a challenge for everyone and the pandemic has hit activities for the Duke of Edinburgh Award very hard, therefore our students have had to be creative in order to make progress with their awards since March 2020. However, despite the many challenges that the students faced, they have gone on to achieve some remarkable things. Our currently active 84 participants in the Year 10 Bronze group have completed 166 out of the 252 sections. This is better than previous cohorts at the same time! Our 35 Year 11 Silver award group have almost completed their awards with 21 of them awaiting the final Assessor Reports from their Qualifying Expedition. Of the other 10, all but one have just one section to complete and all these are well underway. Volunteer Sections have been a challenge, but the students have certainly risen to it in a variety of ways, including all sorts of community work related to the current crisis, as well as innovative ideas like the missing maps online project, which helps humanitarian aid agencies when there has been a natural disaster like the November 2020 Izmir earthquake in Turkey. As always, the commitment of staff and other community helpers to the expedition schedule this term has been amazing, as it involved five successive weekends of activity at one point to get as far as we have. In summary, the current groups are completing their awards in spite of it all, and I think this is testament to the outstanding resilience of the students.

## **Homework**

We had a fantastic response to our homework consultation earlier this term. Based on the feedback students, families and our teachers have provided, we have enacted a number of changes which we hope you will welcome. Students will receive a new Knowledge Organiser and pink homework book in January and we have also updated our website with all the new changes. Please can I take this opportunity to thank all those who participated.

## **End of Term Arrangements – Department for Education & PHE Guidance**

You may have read in the media this week that the Department for Education (DfE), in conjunction with Public Health England (PHE), provided some updated guidance to schools. This guidance consequently means that on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December the school will not be open for students.

**This means that the last day of term will now be Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December**, where we plan to have a full day in school with period 5 allocated as a tutor period. During this time we will be sharing our virtual end of term assembly with the students and giving them all a gift from the staff at Isca Academy. We apologise for any convenience that this will cause.

The reason for this slightly earlier end to our term is because Public Health England have asked for a six day window, after the final day of teaching, where schools are asked to remain contactable so that they can assist with any contact tracing where necessary. This will allow enough time for any positive COVID-19 cases to be identified and confirmed by a test, and for relevant close contacts to be traced. The DfE recognise that this communication has arrived late in the term and we have let you know as soon as possible. As always, your support with this is very much appreciated.

The DfE have recommended that all Parents/Carers are made aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases during the holidays:

- Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus, **having developed symptoms within 48 hours** of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising students and their families of the need for self-isolation. This is because the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.
- School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. As our last teaching day will now be on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December, there will be no pupil contact tracing beyond Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December. This means the school will not be in contact with parents on or after 24<sup>th</sup> December with any news that pupils must self-isolate.
- The staff responsible for contact tracing will designate a period of time each day, up to and including 23<sup>rd</sup> December, to receive notification of positive cases. If you need to notify the School during this time of a positive test result then please email [covid@iscaexeter.co.uk](mailto:covid@iscaexeter.co.uk) Please do not telephone as the phone lines will not be manned after Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December. Where necessary, the School will then make contact with you.
- Where pupils are required to self-isolate due to contact with a positive case after the first 6 days following the end of term, the School does not need to be informed about their absence until the first day of the new term.

It remains vital for all of our students to be in school up to and including the last day of teaching, which will now be on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December and once again, apologies for any inconvenience that this may cause.

As we look ahead to the Spring Term, I want to thank you for your overwhelming support over the last term and I do hope you have a safe and enjoyable festive season. We look forward to seeing you again on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Yours sincerely,



**Miss Aimee Mitchell, Headteacher**