

6th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

What a difference a day makes! On Sunday the Prime Minister was sticking to his educational guns, then on Monday evening he announced that his artillery had changed direction. This letter tries to explain the current situation regarding:

- **REMOTE ONLINE LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS UNTIL FEBRUARY HALF TERM**
- **PROVISION FOR VULNERABLE AND KEY WORKER STUDENTS**
- **GCSE & A LEVEL EXAMINATIONS**
- **VOCATIONAL EXAMINATIONS**
- **'MASS TESTING'**
- **Mr TUTINO's NOVEL**

- **REMOTE ONLINE LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS UNTIL FEBRUARY HALF TERM**

The start of term has commenced as expected, with all students having remote online learning. **All students are expected to log onto their class Teams on a daily basis and follow their regular daily timetable.** It was pleasing seeing excellent levels of engagement yesterday and high levels of attendance in most classes. Teachers will either provide live lessons via Teams at the time when they would ordinarily be teaching the class or upload other work if that is more appropriate. Teachers will be available 'live' during lessons and are contactable via the chat facility of Teams and by email if needed. Please find enclosed with this letter **an accompanying copy of our *Microsoft Teams Guidance for Students and Parents Jan 2021***. If your child encounters any difficulties, please email helpdesk@stratfordschool.co.uk for assistance.

- **PROVISION FOR VULNERABLE AND KEY WORKER STUDENTS**

As we are in a national lockdown with a requirement to stay at home, the safest place for the vast majority of students is to keep them at home. Most of our students are of an age and maturity level where they are safe working from home. Teaching staff are fully deployed delivering online learning to their classes. Some staff are nevertheless in school to support those students who have been identified as most in need of educational support. We have a small number of places available to supervise the children of critical workers when both parents are at work and it is not safe for the student to be at home. We will prioritise provision for Years 7 and 8. Students will be supervised whilst they follow the same online learning that everyone else will be doing from home. As we all know this virus is transmitted from human to human and that means to reduce the likelihood of transmission we must have a minimum number of people in the building. We appreciate that most children would have a better learning environment in school, but at this time of crisis public health is the overarching priority. Please contact us via keyworkers@stratfordschool.co.uk if you need to request a place and your child is in Year 7 or 8.

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- **GCSE & A LEVEL EXAMINATIONS**

On Sunday, the Prime Minister announced that “it's not possible or fair for all exams to go ahead this summer, as normal”. The Education Secretary this afternoon made a statement in the House of Commons confirming that **there will be some form of teacher-assessed grades instead of GCSE and A Level examinations this summer**. He suggested that he wanted “to put trust in teachers not algorithms” in response to the controversies of last summer. As a school, we will no doubt need to provide specific evidence to justify and help moderate grades. Rest assured that we will do all we can to secure the grades they deserve. **What the students need to do now is to do all they can to convince us they deserve really good grades - engagement with remote learning is absolutely essential.**

In the meantime, our internal Year 11 and Year 13 Pre-Public Examinations (PPEs or mocks) have been postponed and are likely to be rescheduled at a later date.

- **VOCATIONAL EXAMINATIONS**

As things stand, external vocational examinations are set to continue next week. Year 10 students are still expected to attend on Monday to sit their **Sports Science and Sports Studies** examination. We are still expecting **Year 12 & 13 Applied Science and Year 13 ICT** examinations to continue later in the week. Students should continue to revise for these vocational examinations.

With infection rates running high, we must do everything we can when students are on site to prevent possible transmission within our community. **Hands, Face, Space precautionary measures remain in place, and must be adhered to at all times, including as students travel to and from school.** Students need to bring an appropriate face covering with them. Please help reiterate the message that attending exams is not an opportunity to mingle, catch up and get together and that students must maintain social distancing in line with mandatory level 5 requirements.

- **'MASS TESTING'**

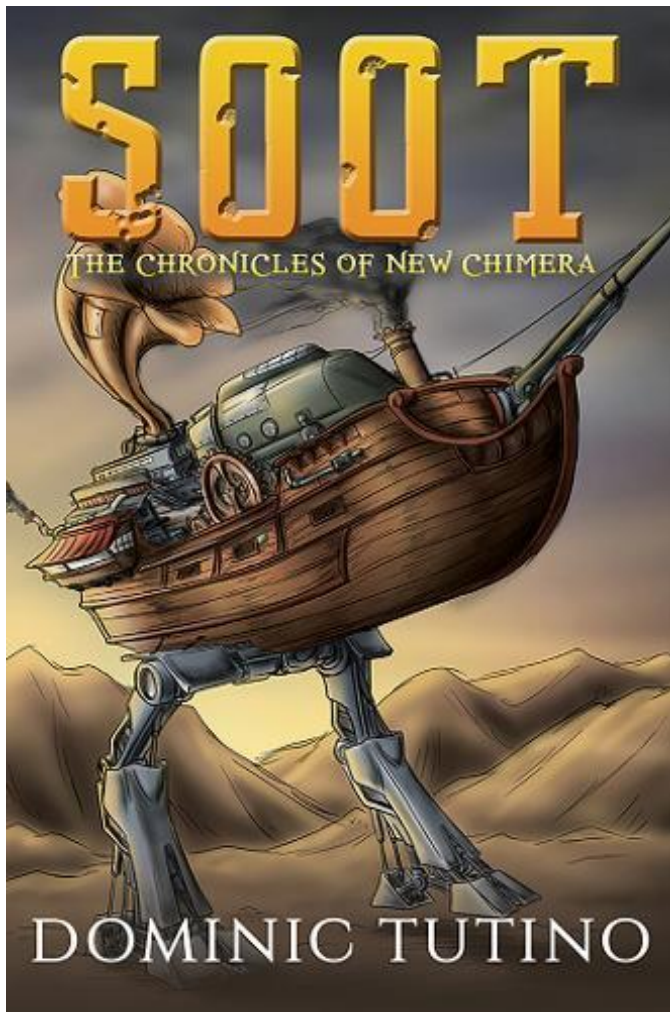
Having spent a considerable amount of time preparing to implement the ‘rapid mass testing’ I described last week, those plans are now on hold. Thank you to the dozens of individuals who volunteered to help out with the process.

Instead, **we are now intending to proceed on a much smaller scale, administering COVID-19 tests known as ‘lateral flow tests’ to those students and staff who are in school on a weekly basis.**

Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing we will help find asymptomatic cases and break chains of transmission to stop the virus spread and help to keep our school open as safely as possible. Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school safely. **A separate letter is being sent to parents of our vulnerable and key worker students with more detailed information and a parental consent form for the testing which will require a response.**

- **Mr TUTINO's NOVEL**

I am delighted to announce that Mr Tutino, one of our English teachers is set to have his novel 'Soot' published on 8th January. It is aimed at a young adult / teen market:



Soot is a powerful and secretive substance. Little is known of the crystal's origins, but its multiple uses make it the most expensive commodity in the country. A commodity on which New Chimera was built.

New Chimera is a steampunk metropolis separated by wealth into two ringed districts, with the only consistent links between them being the secrets and corruption that flow like water, fuelled by its dictatorial ruling family, the Flintlocks.

The only people able to travel freely (although illegally) through the districts are the varied street gangs who battle for truth, liberty and survival on a daily basis.

Red is the newest resident of New Chimera, after spending his formative years in one of the city's many orbiting orphanages, where the unexplained death of his brother alienated him entirely.

After falling in debt to a gang of underground freedom fighters, Red must fight, steal and possibly kill his way to not only uncover the answer to his brother's death but also the true origins of New Chimera's wealth and the terrifying link between the two.

Here is a link to the publisher's website, where you can buy a copy

<https://www.austinmacauley.com/book/soot-0>.

The perfect lockdown gift which I'm sure he'd happily sign in due course!

Thank you for your ongoing support as we seek to navigate these rapidly changing times. With very best wishes for a safe, happy and successful academic year,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Neil Wallace'.

Neil Wallace
Headteacher