

20th January 2021

Dear students and parents

I hope this email finds you and your families keeping safe and well. Usually at the beginning of each term I write to all students and parents to provide a full update on key college matters and a look to the future. These times are sadly far from usual, and the last two weeks will have been particularly challenging for all of our community. For those affected personally by COVID, our thoughts are with you.

At Collyer's our community continue to respond with a strong spirit to the challenges. Since the third national lockdown started two weeks ago all teaching, learning and support has moved online. Our students and staff are very well experienced with this mode of delivery following a term of 50/50 blended learning. Onsite we have welcomed a very small daily group of vulnerable students and children of critical workers as well as our cohort of post-19 high needs students. The HeadStart Day Nursery remains open of course. We have continued to plan for testing and have started to test staff who are onsite. Government and county council advice on testing has been changing and we will provide further detail in due course.

Clearly like all of you we look forward to a time when a sense of normality can return. Our planning for a return to 100% onsite delivery is regularly revisited and I am delighted to share that a large new canopy is now installed in Denne Quad to increase social space. We are also putting in a second catering outlet and will be able to use the Sports Hall once mass asymptomatic testing has been completed. When schools and colleges have reopened and it is safe to do so at Collyer's, we remain committed to fully onsite education again.

Teaching, learning and support

Throughout this turbulent year we have always been guided by our professional expertise in post-16 education in the way we arrange our blended and distance-learning provision. Our teachers know what works well for their subjects at this level and how to support our students to achieve results that place us as the top state provider for A Level in the whole of West Sussex and one of the top sixth form colleges in the country.

Since September we have used Teams as the consistent college platform for delivery and SharePoint for subject content. All sessions are registered to provide structure and a minimum of 50% of sessions are delivered as fully live lessons. We were pleased to see this carefully considered approach is supported by a [recent Ofsted report](#) into what is working well in remote education at a national level. Our tutors and teachers track engagement and achievement using MyProgress and we are committed to maintaining regular reporting through Progress Review Days and Parents Evenings.

You will be aware that the government published two consultations or updates last week – one on A Level and GCSE summer exams and the other on vocational assessments. We will consider both proposals carefully and contribute to the consultation. It is vital that the government and Ofqual select as fair and clear an approach as possible for summer results and all students and parents should be assured that we are 100% committed to every learner and their future plans. Our systems for generating Centre Assessment Grades last year were extremely robust and well planned – the same will be true with whatever system is eventually decided on for this year. Whilst it is understandable that students will be disappointed by the cancellation of external summer exams, keeping focused and engaged in your studies until the end of the college year is vital in achieving your potential at Collyer's and will ensure you are as ready as possible for your next step.

Strategy for the future

Amidst all the challenges of the autumn term, we were still able to engage in a whole community discussion about the future of Collyer's and agree on a new [college strategic plan](#) for the next three years. The college is on an exciting journey to its 500th anniversary of foundation in 2032 and at the heart of the new plan is a commitment to grow, to innovate and to preserve. The incredible achievements of our students year after year make us one of the leading sixth form colleges in the country, attracting students not just locally but from across the region. This success, combined with the growth in local demographics due to new housing developments, means that the college will be growing each year.

It is important that we are able to continue to offer the very best post-16 education as demand increases – and we are delighted to announce that with the aid of significant capital funding from the Department for Education we will be starting work soon on a brand-new ten classroom teaching block. Alongside this expansion of teaching and learning buildings, we are also looking to create new, modern social and catering spaces to accommodate our extra students. The masterplan for the estate is an ambitious one, leading Collyer's into the next 500 years with a spacious and modern estate built sustainably, with strong links to nature and celebrating our heritage.

The foundation of Collyer's in 1532, during the reign of Henry VIII, is core to the college's identity and culture. As we move closer to the start of a ten year countdown to our quincentennial, we have formed a new Heritage Committee comprising staff, students and Old Collyerian's Association (OCA) members which aims to research, archive and celebrate our history. Look out for announcements soon about fascinating additions to our website and community events that celebrate major upcoming milestones - 100 years since the foundation of the OCA in 2022, 50 years since conversion to a sixth form college in 2026 and of course 500 years since our foundation by Richard Collyer in 2032. If any parents or other family members attended Collyer's and have artefacts or stories to share for a timeline we are building of our history – please could you email admin@collyers.ac.uk.

Finally, it is clear that all educational institutions have a responsibility to be engaged in and raise awareness of environmental sustainability. In June 2020, the FE/HE Climate Commission published a [roadmap](#) for institutions to guide them in developing their approach to sustainability. Along with other colleges across Sussex we are pledging to become a Leading College for sustainability by 2023. A new Sustainability Committee is being created comprising staff, students and local community members. Look out for more announcements soon on our website about the committee's plans and new initiatives. In these difficult and challenging times we continue to plan for a brighter future at Collyer's.

Take care everyone and keep safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'D' and 'L'.

Dan Lodge
Principal