



Castle Donington College

Principal: Mrs Julie Sheppard

Vice-Principal: Mr Nathan Barratt
Assistant Principal: Mr Ben Wilkinson

23rd June 2020

Dear Castle Donington College Community,

Another week marked off on the calendar. It feels like I am permanently living in 'fast forward' at the moment. Saturday was the longest day of the year. From now on, the nights will close in and the days become shorter. (Just so you know, it is 185 days until Christmas!)

We have opened the College this week to more pupils and are delighted to see Year 10 pupils once more. The teaching staff are very excited to be in their classrooms again, doing what they do best. The plans and preparations, cleaning regimes and risk assessments have been worth it. It is wonderful to see our young people again. We have missed them. Their thirst for knowledge, the questions they ask, their opinions, the laughter, their chatter and most of all their smiles. The announcement on Friday that 'all pupils, in all year groups, will be back to school in September' is very welcome. We look forward to seeing each and every one of our pupils again.

In the same briefing Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, revealed early details the Government's Covid Catch-Up Plan; new funding for primary and secondary schools in England to 'tackle the impact of lost teaching time'. We welcome any additional funding and will work hard to ensure that no Castle Donington pupil is left behind or disadvantaged by the pandemic. We are still waiting to hear more detail about this strategy in addition to the broader plan for bringing all pupils back in the Autumn and what changes might be made to curriculum, tests and exams in 2020/21. We expect to receive further information about these things in the next two weeks and I will keep you updated.

Our plans for a return after the summer break are already well underway. The timetable is written, the curriculum reviewed and planned and learning resources agreed and created. Year 9 pupils are about to receive news of their GCSE option choices, the courses they will be following for the next two years and we are soon to deliver our final transition pack to Year 6 pupils and their families. The last three weeks of the school year are always busy with key events such as Sports Day, the Summer Fair and Induction Days. We look forward to a time when we can enjoy these collective experiences again.

In the Sheppard household, Father's Day was marked with the gift of a new map. The oversized diagrammatic representation of our vicinity prompted a rather aggressive huddle over the dining table. We jostled and fought to pinpoint local landmarks, point out friends' houses and identify places where our memories were made. We began to reminisce, and then yearn for a return to normality. We are missing routine family events, such as clothes shopping and match day. As lifelong Rams fans and season ticket holders, my husband and daughters tried to relive the emotion-fuelled hours of a Saturday afternoon at Pride Park by jumping around our living room, whooping and yelling in celebration of the hat-trick scored. As enjoyable as the victory was, it just wasn't the same as being there.

We have all experienced 'not being there' recently. A football match; a special occasion; school; time with a loved one. The last few months have proved that even in the most difficult circumstances, where gaps have appeared in our normality, our hope and spirit have endured and our sense of community remains intact. I expect significant easing of lockdown restrictions to be announced later today and the normality we yearn for will be a little closer. I hope we won't lose sight of the finest human qualities that we discovered and that have helped us through.

Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Best wishes

Julie Sheppard

Principal