

Equality takes work, especially in the hardest moments
April 26, 2021

Dear Students,

One of the first letters that I wrote to you last year was about 'Our first test,' - the week when you received your O-level results, and we had to support each other as a community while some students celebrated, some had mixed feelings, and some were disappointed. Because that happened during the first few weeks of school, we had to react, as our community was just getting started.

We now know that we're entering a difficult month, and our community will be tested again. This time I hope we won't be reacting, which is why I'm writing this letter now. We're a much stronger community now, with a full year behind us, including trials like quarantine, online learning, uncertainty of school openings and closings, and much more, that have brought us together.

But we can't take that strength for granted, for once we relax and assume that our values are strong, we'll begin to lose them. And on that subject, I have noticed a few examples over the last couple weeks that have disappointed me. Examples of people not caring for each other in the way that they should, or being exclusive about who they spend time with and study with, or not helping out when there is work that needs to be done, or the like. They haven't been huge things, but it only takes a few small cracks to weaken a building, if those cracks are ignored and start spreading.

And they're concerning enough that I'm mentioning them here and letting you all know that I want us all to be fully focused over these next few weeks, not just on your studying, but on living by our values and supporting each other. I want us to step back and remind ourselves that equality takes work, especially in the face of challenges, and we're going to need to put in the work especially in the next six weeks. Don't just take this time to focus on yourself. Remember in our Honor Code that "we understand that each member of the community depends on one another, so that both successes and hardships are shared." More than ever, this is the time to look back on those lines.

Related to this, one thing that I'm hoping to do over the next two weeks is to meet with each U6 student individually. I've been in the background this past week while taking some time to rest and prepare myself for the upcoming six weeks, but I look forward to jumping back in alongside you during this important moment in your time here at the school. When I meet with each of you, I'll partly just want to see how you're feeling about exams coming up, but also how things are for you in general. I'm happy to talk about whatever is on your mind, whether serious or lighthearted - it doesn't have to be a specific set of questions or topics. I'll have some in mind but I'll let you guide the conversation. And I'll announce in person a sign-up system for these meetings.

Looking forward to checking in with each of you, and wishing you the very best of luck and focus in this important week ahead.

Standing with you,
James