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Dear Parents/Guardians

This is, as I am sure you will appreciate, a letter which I did not expect to write, nor is it a situation that has ever crossed my mind as a potential hurdle for all of us to cross as part of the current Year 11 cohorts journey through Bishop Wordsworth's School. Nevertheless, the landscape is evolving day by day and, ultimately the two words which I used to introduce the new school year of 'challenge and resilience' seem more apt than any of us were to realise.

I would firstly like to offer my sincere thanks to both you and the boys for making my time as the lead for the year group so enjoyable and thought provoking. It has been a privilege to share in the journey that each of them has engaged in and I am indebted to them for the growth, both personally and professionally, that I have benefited from as part of the process.

While there was an inevitability to the last couple of days in terms of the national picture and a build up to school closures, I appreciate that this will not negate the disappointment that the boys will feel in having to sign off from a community which they have contributed to for the last five years – almost a third of a lifetime for some of them. Let me assure you that I am equally disappointed not to have had the opportunity to address the group, nor see them to the annual leavers day with real opportunity to wind down and reflect on all that they have already achieved before the classification of these are defined by the brown paper envelopes of August.

I have no clear time frame with which to work at this stage, but I am in conversation with the Middle School office on the topic of the Year 11 leaving period. Once we are provided with a clearer picture nationally then I will certainly consider the options for marking the end of their time together. Nonetheless, any announcement or suggestion at this stage would be mere conjecture and I do not wish to operate on any basis where a situation might not allow me the opportunity to honour my word.

It is therefore with a degree of sadness that I write to send the boys and extended families my very best in the immediate future as we all begin to establish new norms in a climate where I hope the concepts of mindfulness and community will be keenly discussed and visited by all. I will miss their humour, mischief and company but I am minded that they have each served one another admirably in their own arena – be that the sports field, the choir stalls or otherwise. As a result I feel proud and glad to have reached the point in the journey where I wish them well, knowing they have given themselves every chance for success in the future whatever they may choose.

Kindest regards and heartfelt wishes to all your families at this unprecedented time.

James Oldham

Assistant Head, Middle School