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February 2019

Dear Parents

Mock Examinations & February Half Term

There is little need to reinforce just how beneficial the nine days over Half Term can be for those students who use the time wisely. The two main benefits of 'Mock examinations' are to confirm relative strengths and highlight specific areas of weakness. The former generates a degree of well-founded confidence ahead of the A-levels themselves and the latter a degree of caution and urgency about work yet to be completed and assimilated effectively. How effectively your son applies himself now will have a very significant bearing on the final outcome of his 'A' levels; the range of opportunities that will remain open to him subsequently and the confidence that he will have as he leaves King's and in many cases home.

Unconditional & Reduced Offers from University

There has been significant press coverage questioning the wisdom of universities making Unconditional Offers. Universities are also increasingly making 'Reduced' offers or providing some financial incentive to students who make them a 'Firm' choice. This year 34 students or 31% of our UCAS cohort have received Unconditional Offers and 17 or 15.5% 'Reduced Offers'. The school's advice remains the same. In the light of their mock examination performance students should evaluate the likelihood of achieving their target grades this summer and only at that point decide which of their offers to make 'Firm' or 'Insurance'.

As a note of caution, although offers of this sort make very little difference to the outcomes for the top 25% of our students, sadly the same is not true for the remaining 75%. Statistically they are likely to achieve A-level results about half a grade below their target in every subject taken. Students may choose to accept an unconditional offer because it is from their preferred university or because it represents a less anxious path to navigate, both good reasons. However, students must not use such offers as a soft excuse to work less, not least because graduate recruiters are now using A-level results as much as degree classification to select.

Independent Study Time in Year 13

Those students deemed to be 'on track' after their mock examination results and feedback and who also have an attendance record of above 95% will have confirmed that they have the self-discipline to maximise independent study time. From Monday 11 March this group will be given the option of studying from home on the mornings when they have no timetabled taught lessons. Other Year 13 students will enjoy the same option from Monday 13 May.

On behalf of the sixth form staff I would like to thank students for their good humour and continued co-operation and thank you for your help and willingness to work constructively with the school.

Executing his final plans with energy and commitment provides the best chance for your son to finish his time at King's in the way that best reflects his talents and ensures that he can pursue his future goals.

We can only ever do our best, so let that be the final message and mission for all.

Yours sincerely

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Head of Sixth Form