



Sunday 4th July 2021

RE: Final letter of the Academic Year

Dear WSO Secondary Community,

If 2019-20 was a test of whether WSO could change and adapt to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020-21 feels like it was a test of our collective resilience and endurance – students, families and staff alike. While our acceptance of COVID increased, it still evoked some changes throughout the year. There was little respite from the health and safety hyper-vigilance. As such the student experience remained quite different, teaching and learning looks different and assessment conditions for all students and especially for our externally examined students were changed drastically.

Didn't we all just hope and believe that September 2020 would have seen a return to normal schooling and COVID would have been a thing of the past. What have we learnt, one year on?

We should have learned

- To embrace the present and make the most of what is in front of us
- Our personal and collective wellbeing is of primary importance for without either we cannot thrive
- Learning can and will happen in this new normal
- Grades don't define individuals – actions, behaviours and attitudes do

While I am prepared to embrace that learning should be more flexible and COVID has shown us that it can be successful, I am desperate to see the face-to-face connection return to the student experience. What school provides is a vehicle for friendship and connection, an opportunity to interact and learn with others, a chance to laugh and cry, celebrate and empathise together. These for me, are the learnings for life. Let us all hope that we can see more of these things return to WSO in 2021-22.

A few acknowledgements to close. Thank you to all our leaving staff, for their contributions to WSO in their time here. Whether returning home or onto other international settings, we hope to retain contact with you personally and professionally. A special acknowledgement to **Daniella Aschettino** who has been a long serving member of staff. Entering WSO as a teacher and leaving on promotion as Secondary Head Teacher at GEMS Metropole is an amazing achievement and a testament to her hardwork and dedication, which many of you as families benefitted from. We wish you all the very best, Daniella.



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To our entire staff, my heart-felt thanks and best wishes for a well-earned summer break. The demands of the last 12 months have been considerable and you need to be refreshed as we go again in September. Thank you for your patience and resilience. Thank you for your commitment to our students and their outcomes. I hope that travel channels open sufficiently to allow you to go where you need to.

My special thanks to our Senior Leadership Team, many new to their roles and in such a challenging year, a tribute to their flexibility and skills. We will build on this further in 2021-22 and I look forward to the school advancing under your care.

Last but not least, a huge thank you to our students who have endured such upheaval and yet continue to smile and make the most of what happens every day. To you, our parents and community - the challenges that you face do not deter you from wanting the best outcomes for your children. We can only be successful in partnership with you. Thank you for your ongoing support and critique.

From September, let us all celebrate the WSO 10-year journey together, and work hard to build on that for the next 10 years.

Sincerely

Andy Kai Fong
Secondary Principal

