

LETTERS FROM LOCKDOWN

STUDENTS AT MULBERRY ACADEMY
SHOREDITCH WERE INVITED TO WRITE ABOUT
THEIR EXPERIENCES OF LIFE IN LOCKDOWN AS
PART OF THEIR REMOTE ENGLISH LESSONS. THIS
IS AN ANTHOLOGY OF SOME OF THEIR WRITING.

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Year 7 Winners

My letter from lockdown - Haniya Rashid

Lockdown has made a very big impact on my life, and changes that will stay with me forever. When I first found out school was closing, I was exhilarated. Months without any school, how amazing would that be, well not as great as I thought. I really miss school and can't wait to go back to my 'normal' life. I want to haul myself out of bed and have my mum chasing me around the house to hurry and get ready before I'm late.

I have found it really difficult staying at home for so long and often getting into arguments with my little brother, going for walks as often as I can, just to get out of the house. Waking up every morning at 8.55 and doing my daily Joe Wicks exercise at 9.

Trying to work at home is a real struggle. My mum works for the NHS, she tells us of all the stories when she comes home. It makes us shiver knowing that anyone can get the virus and maybe even tomorrow it could be us. I can't wait to see all my friends and family again after so long. Our only way of feeling together are our daily zoom calls.

Lockdown has also had a positive effect on me. It has made me appreciate the small things in life. I have always taken school and family for granted. It has made me realise how many unfortunate children feel knowing that they aren't able to go to school. Education and school is a huge privilege and I now look at it in a whole new way due to the lockdown. It has separated us from our loved ones, friends and family only to bring an even bigger celebration when we see each other. I am still optimistic about our future yet I know it will scar me for life. The rotation of the world has suddenly changed. Everything is new and strange.

The Coronavirus has left a bittersweet taste.

Inaya Tasnim

I walk to school alone. More and more people are not willing to take the risk. I step in and it's near to emptiness- something I have never yet experienced until then. I look at the smart TV on the wall. 156 deaths. That's 47 more than yesterday. This was my first year of Secondary; the most fun year of Secondary... and yet I still don't even get to experience the whole thing? I sit and wait for the bell to ring, wondering where the future will take us...

We walk to the assembly hall and have a joint assembly due to the scarcity of people. How long is this going to go on for? When will we go into lockdown? When will schools close? Assembly ends and the whole hallway is buzzing. School is officially closing at the end of this week and I can't help but feeling a little excited.

Lockdown has officially started and I have to admit, I'm bored. Despite the constant fights that my siblings have, things are moving so slowly and the day doesn't seem to be moving on. Things are a lot different to what I expected. We hoped that people would follow the lockdown rules, the deaths lessened, and lockdown would be eased soon but we were

moving way too fast. Lockdown would not end until a few months passed and everyone needed to understand that.

It has been hard keeping on top of my homework- especially when we are still learning new things via Google Classroom. I wish that I had taken advantage of my time in school and had appreciated every moment with my friends, my classmates and even my teachers. All I knew was that even when we were back in school, things wouldn't be the same as how it used to be.

I have realised that this deadly virus is simply a blessing in disguise and this lockdown is a time for you to spend time with your families and to focus on your priorities. I just hope that one day things will return back to normal and the world will be a happy place once more.

Year 7 Highly Commended

Eleni Brooks

I don't even **remember** what life was like without lockdown. At all. And there's so much uncertainty of when this'll end. But here's the one thing I know for sure: I know how to wash my hands like an **absolute PRO**.

There are so many new skills to be learned at home- for example I learnt how to touch-type perfectly (45 wpm, not bad, eh? Just 172 more and I'll beat the world record!) and I can read so fast I finished 6 books in one day!

I took a reading test and I can read quicker than 99% of the UK, and if I read for 2 hours a day, I can get through 6,912 books in one year (based on the average book length of 90,000 words).

I can draw noses well (no, seriously!) and I like making little mini books- it's a skill, ok? - and making bookshelves for them.

I think I'll get through lockdown just fine.

Dear future-self, - Hafiza Yasmin

I don't know where to start. But I do know where I started. Lockdown is pretty boring. I miss my friends. It's quite dull at home. I've always thought staying at home would be the dream but there is no one really to talk to besides three annoying younger brothers and a newborn sister who I can't tell my life story to because she can't even talk yet but can only vomit and put saliva on all my clothes. But at least we have Google classroom to stay in touch.

Ever since I was a little girl, I've always dreamed of how primary was going to end. Like normal schools they normally end it with a year 6 dance for the boys and girls or even have a leaving assembly where they perform a show. My year 6 ended with a "happily ever after". Then I've always imagined finishing off my first year of year 7 in secondary but unfortunately that didn't happen. Now I have to wait until September, when my brother is starting at the school too!

However, I know that I'm not the only one going through all this. Everyone in the world is facing and feeling what I'm experiencing right now. Things have a beginning and eventually have an ending but the way I see it,

"If you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain".- Dolly Parton

Mohammed Adnan

On 18th March 2020, I left school and went home. The government was going to make an announcement tomorrow that United Kingdom was going into lockdown. I did not return to school as I realised that the lockdown was due to an illness to a called Covid 19. The illness attacks the lungs and airways and as I am asthmatic, I was scared I would catch it and from then until today I remain home.

It was exceedingly difficult as we all watch the news and the death toll went up and up. I was worried that we would never get over this. It was so unreal as if it was something out of a movie, only it was no movie. The whole world started to report that Covid 19 was spreading with all the countries. This was a pandemic and there was no cure for it. I wonder how the poor countries would cope as the UK government was not coping. People starts to avoid each other; friends were no longer friends but feared each other just in case they had Covid 19.

At home, my family and I tried so hard to cope but it was difficult that first, soon we had a routine. School, exercise, eat, watch tv, read and going for walks at early hours of the morning. We would laugh, cry and be excited. Easter came and there was no celebration. Ramadan came and there was no family. Eid came and there was no celebration with family and friends.

Everyday, we pray that this illness goes away and that we may see all those we love and care about. I wish that I can return to school and that I may play and laugh with my friends and teachers. I wish I can sit with all my family and eat together at my grandmother's house.

Year 7 Commended

Life in Lockdown (honest opinion) - Aaban Zarar

I thought of lockdown as a year long holiday but a few weeks later it started to be a bit boring. I thought of this as an opportunity to do no work but that soon changed. With a booklet full of questions and Google Classroom piling up with homeworks I didn't get anywhere near to fun.

I do have a ps4 but it got boring and I had to focus all my attention to Homework. I guess lockdown is 30% fun and 70% boring.

A Moment in History - Anisa Raman Mir

It's hard watching the news, it's hard staying at home. It's all hard, but what makes it easier is knowing that all this effort isn't going to waste. Saving millions of lives.

I miss my friends, going to school, swimming every week. But what makes it easier is knowing family is right by my side, it's not often you get such a long time with your family.

Discovering new passions we didn't know we had. As a Muslim, I can say that this Ramadan was a Ramadan I probably will never experience again, with my family all day and fasting wasn't that hard anymore.

Lockdown has made me realise that we tend to take things for granted, and never really appreciate what we already have. I can't imagine how the families that can't afford to buy meals would feel at this time, but I feel proud to know that we helped them with charities.

However, I don't find it entirely bad. During this time, I managed to complete many works of art and discovered an interest in baking.

Trying to figure out how to put each day at use. My religion has taught me that whatever happens, happens with a purpose, and I truly believe that there are much better things yet to come.

I thank every teacher for checking up on us with phone calls.

This will certainly be a moment to go down in history.

Benjamin Padilla

When school shut down I didn't know what would happen to all our future work and quizzes we would miss in year 7. I was also very down that I wouldn't see my friends for a long amount of time.

Since school is closed it has changed my daily routine to eat breakfast, do homework, play video games, and sleep after a tiring day.

During lockdown I disliked that I couldn't go outside on the sunny beautiful days and I have also disliked that many of my favourite restaurants and fast food places have closed down for example Nandos.

One thing I do like about lockdown is that I can be wrapped around a warm blanket while doing homework and that I can choose what I can eat during lunch.

When lockdown ends I would love to go outside on a sunny day, go to a fast food place or restaurant and meet my friends that I have been waiting to meet after many lonely months.

Life in Lockdown - Fatuma Sahra Mohamed

I felt isolated and lonely. My heart was dying of boredom. I remember all the different classrooms. Subjects. I remember my friends in the lunch hall sitting with me on a table. I remember my teachers teaching us history, PE, maths. As I looked around the school I could see an empty classroom, empty hall. Empty school.

I decided I have to work harder and improve. I planned and planned my schedule. Work, break, work. It was continuous everyday. I worried what was going to happen. I hoped everything went back to normal. I hoped everything would change.

It has been hard to stick with these rules. Most of them. I struggle to focus, sometimes tempted to stop and watch television. Yet I don't. I miss my normal life, school and everything great.

At least I can enjoy indoor games with my sisters. We laugh when we find something really funny. Jokes like "Santa Claus' helpers are known as subordinate Clauses. I feel lucky because I'm safe at home.

In the future, I wish I had a normal life again.

Ishaq Miah

As I looked around school on the last day, I saw many happy faces, not just that, I also witnessed many disappointed faces on this day. But these actions were taken for our safety and health, and we shouldn't be disappointed because this is for our good. Anyways these were how some people felt on the last day of school during this dangerous pandemic. However, I didn't know how serious this actually was, so in this case I didn't really have any thoughts or questions, I was just glad that school was closing.

During lockdown I set myself a target, and that target is to stay fit and try to do some exercise everyday. This is good for everyone even for people who don't need it because lockdown prevents the virus from spreading, and to do that we have to stay inside and not go out. But realistically the government has allowed us to go out and do exercise but I think it's safer to do it indoors rather than risking lives. Me and my family also hoped that the pandemic would end soon and everyone would be able to go outside and enjoy. But these things will take loads of time to return to normality.

In school there were many things that I used to like and enjoy doing which now I can't do. Those things were spending time with my friends, doing P.E and maths and also playing football. I miss going out and interacting with my friends and family members. I find it hard keeping myself at home, so instead I try to keep myself company by doing some quizzes and board games which makes my mind refreshed and not become lazy.

The thing that keeps me going and keeps me positive is having the opportunity to be communicating with my friends and family over social media and calls. This is great because some people may not have been able to have contact within their family as they might be living in less fortunate conditions. Therefore, I think me and many other people are very lucky to be interacting with their families and to find out how they are.

In the future I think people will be more aware about hygiene, cleanliness, and more aware about getting just a bit too close. Now that everyone has some sort of experience, they must be aware by now that if this happens again, we are most likely to be in grave danger. As there is still no cure for these types of viruses. It has also changed me because now I know how serious these viruses are and what it can do to people.

Manuela Palacios

Today I feel comfortable working on the computer because the lockdown made me learn how to use it better. It makes me feel excited to realize that I am learning how to use the computer faster and that it is fun!

I also like staying safe at home, (mainly during the early morning), but a bit sad of not going out shopping with my mum or go to explore London with my dad. I do miss a lot of things from school, like my friends, teachers, and Friday's fish and chips.

Although, I do go out to the park or to the garden sometimes during the week and spend a long time there looking at the plants and the fish in the pond, to whom I feed twice a week. I know they are hungry every time I visit them because they open their round mouth desperately and it looks like they are trying to tell me something. I imagine in my mind having a conversation with them.

I also observe the small insects in the garden like bees taking out nectar from flowers or ladybugs. Ladybugs eat aphids and aphids love roses. That made me understand better the importance of the food chain.

I hope in the near future I will be able to see my friends again and hear about their lockdown stories during lunchtime, and that people around the world would be able to go out again at the streets with new energies and I hope for a happier society.

Maymuna Rahaman

I felt a feeling of fear and relief spark in me.

Experiences in lockdown, it may be described as a boring half term holiday where we don't go out, but truly, lockdown is doing more to keep us safe from a malicious virus, many are hurt as bad as dying, but there are many still standing. Those who are hopefully spending time with their family, connecting, bonding, making up for the time they would be usually spending at home. However, as a student myself, and following a beautiful religion with its many practices- Islam- lockdown has been harder than I thought. Firstly, since Ramadan has just finished, here are my experiences: every day fasting, waking up at 3 am, not eating the whole day, and completing the whole Quran twice in 30 days, if that's hard, then there's homework that is also to be done, and of course, praying the 5 daily prayers. Personally, most of my homeworks were overdue anyway, therefore I waited till Ramadan finished to complete them (don't worry teachers, they are done now!) To add on, I have been face timing my best friend in Italy, daily talking to her in Italian, keeping the languages in use!

The fear is the virus, the relief is the time I get to spend with my family, happy or sad, and that I have so much time to complete my homework!

I hope you are having a good time at your homes too teachers!

Naima Nur Ahmed

A letter from lockdown...

Lockdown, one situation we are desperate to get rid of.

I look at my school uniform thinking when i will ever wear it again.

I am exhausted of wearing face masks when i go shopping

I am tired of the smell of disinfectant spray lingering around the house after a delivery.

I miss not being allowed to eat with family or friends for my birthday.

I cannot stop thinking about all the times i hugged my grandma sinking through her fluffy cardigan and her soft, soothing voice saying 'i have missed you so much'

Just because normal life is on hold, soon life will go back as usual again but always remember something better is still there for us.



A different way of living - Samantha Ezemah

When I found out that we would go into Lockdown I was definitely thrilled. It must have been the same for you too. We all thought that it would be enjoyable to have weeks off of school, where we could just relax at home. It has been around two months now, since the day I left the more or less empty school, and let us just say this certainly not how I envisioned my first year of secondary school.

In the beginning of lockdown, I felt quite unsure of what was going to happen because it was odd and different because most of us have definitely never experienced something like this and may never experience something like this ever again. I was worried about schoolwork and how I would do it but slowly I was getting used to having to do my work at home and on Google Classroom.

Something that has been hard during lockdown is going out, as you do not have the same flexibility to go out when you want, for example, as the weather in the UK is getting better we are not able to go outside and enjoy it. In lockdown you are also not able to see family and friends, that has also been quite hard.

What keeps me positive are my family, even though they can be annoying sometimes. I feel hopeful because as a Christian girl I put all my faith in Jesus Christ and all my hope in Him. I have kept in touch with my friends by messaging them. Some strategies that my family has had during lockdown is to stick with our normal routine before lockdown to get work done.

I think that this experience has changed me for the good because being in lockdown helps you not take going out or seeing friends and family for granted.

Seeing less without being depressed - Sarah Cardoso Perrira

My lockdown experiences have been tough not seeing my friends and not seeing enough. Though some may say working from home is fun - I think being able to breathe and go outside often can be better.

I am trying to take this lockdown as help to show me how to be more creative and live more with my family. I sometimes find myself reading on my balcony or playing Lego with my brother. Although I try to stay active, not going to school and not seeing my friends and being able to run around is quite hard during lockdown.

I encourage whoever you may be in the world, maybe just a student or maybe a future president or doctor to try and help others through this tough time. Try to stay safe and as creative as you can although I know sometimes it may be hard.

During this lockdown I've tried to help my brother work on his skills as he is in his first year of primary school, bake with my mum, and in general keep a healthy mindset.

I understand if times may be hard for your family but I strongly encourage you to stay calm, safe and creative or as I call it CSC.

Zainab Al-Khalq

You will find yourself constantly saying 'I'm bored!' because the structure of your day is as follows:

- Wake up
- School work
- Lunch
- More school work
- Nothing
- Snack
- Nothing
- Dinner
- Sleep

Days and days will go past until you find something to do and by the next day you're finished with your task. You find that some people are bored throughout and others have found new hobbies in this period. You'll struggle to wake up in time for the school day and not get much sleep at night. You will get closer to your family, plan things after lockdown ends and go on loads of Zoom gatherings and meetings. There will be plenty of these for you to take part in. You will eat and eat some more. You will persistently ask yourself

'When will the school open?' However, the odd number of people will enjoy the comfort at home. So, enjoy this unique experience and make the most of it.

Zaynab Aktar

I don't understand why people want quarantine to end. I like it, I have time to do my own stuff now. I don't have to panic about waking up early and getting dressed, but I do think school is giving us way more work than they normally do at school. I think this year went kind of quickly. During lockdown I've been talking way more to my friends via text. If it wasn't lockdown, they'd be busy with their own work and friends, so I like that I've had time to talk to them. Also, I've been trying out new things like foods, also with Ramadan, I've had food like tacos and grilled foods and wraps. I've had time to spend with my dad and my step sisters and watch Netflix series, and haven't had to worry about spots. I think ever since quarantine started, I've had time to work on my confidence in front of my family since they have always asked me why I'm too quiet.

Food is also not a problem. I live right next to a Co-op and I can get food whenever I'm about to run out, and the queues are barely ever long and the workers know us really well. I've been going on walks in my estate and around, so I think I've been quite healthy even if it is a time where I can eat 24/7.

My Experiences of Lockdown – Adam Osman Bashkel

Lockdown was a surprise for me because without the help of a teacher I thought I would never get my work done. A few days in lockdown and the work is stressing me because it feels way harder than usual so I have been attempting to get rid of my stress.

Lockdown has had a huge effect on my life, it has made me lazy and unhelpful. Once lockdown has finished and I go back to school I will seek the help of a teacher to help me with these problems. Lockdown has also given me good things such as peace, cooking lessons from my family and karate lessons. So with my points I made, lockdown is a good thing and a bad thing for me.

My experience of Lockdown - Zain Shah

At first I thought that lockdown was going to be easy because I can just relax and do whatever I wanted to. But then after 1 week it felt weird that I wasn't going to school or not going outside but it took a while to get used to it. Before lockdown my daily routine was waking up at 7 o'clock and eating breakfast and going to school then coming back home and eating food and to do my homework, watching a bit of entertainment programmes and going to sleep. During the lockdown I still wake up early, eat my breakfast and go to Google classroom to check if I have any homework. Then when I am done with my homework I play Beyblade or make a practice video then eat and go to bed.

When school was shut down I was a bit happy because I got some more time to relax but then after some time I was a bit upset because I didn't get to see my friends or teachers. School was a part of my life and my daily routine.

What I have enjoyed in lockdown so far was that I had more time to spend with my brothers and family or do other stuff that I couldn't do when I had school like making fun videos. Also I enjoyed being with my brothers because they don't see me all the time when I am at school so this is a big opportunity to be with them.

This lockdown teaches us a lesson to be grateful for what we have because we have the internet and have all the facilities to keep us alive but if we look at the poor countries they don't even have access to the internet/ Google classroom or have other basic health facilities to keep them healthy which is very sad. So we need to be grateful for what we have.

What I am looking forward to when lockdown is over is going to the park and seeing my friends because right now I can't do that.

Year 8 Winners

MY LOCKDOWN – John Nemenko

When I found out that school was to be closed, I had mixed feelings. Firstly, I felt extremely happy that I can get free time to relax after a near-gruelling two terms. Lastly, I also feel extremely saddened that I won't be seeing teachers or friends. At the beginning, I didn't know how long this virus would grip the nation. Could it be two weeks, or two months?

Ever since lockdown began, my mum had concocted a new schedule. It runs from 7:30am all the way to 8:00pm. It includes reading, handwriting, schoolwork, art, which included macramé, sewing, embroidery, and life drawing. I also do physical activity, and creative writing. For recreation, I play chess, card games or I play with Lego.

One thing that is so hard about lockdown is going out. The weather has been so good over the last two months, yet we can't seem to go out. We do go out for physical exercise but I would rather go out freely. I would also want to see friends. We do have WhatsApp, but I would rather see them face-to-face.

I enjoy spending time with my family and listening to the birds tweeting, the wind rushing past, the leaves being pummelled by the wind and without a single car. I found it nice that global emissions have decreased so much that Indians can see the Himalayas and there is a clearer sight of the Financial District from Primrose Hill.

Lockdown has given me a chance to see my sister more. She is the funniest person I know. She always scares me even though I am in plain sight. My mum is also funny. When we play chess and I take her queen, unknowingly, of course, she screams and pleads with me to re-do the move when it is touchmove.

When this will be all over, we all will be much wiser. We will be able to take little things for more value, spend more time with family, and to see the world in a better way. We will stop thinking of ourselves and start to think of others. Hopefully we will also see the environment in a better way, too.

Jannah in lockdown - Jannah Misbah

I should have been social distancing from our fridge during lockdown! It's been all about food for me, I have made endless trips to the kitchen cupboards.

I am the eldest child and have two younger brothers. Unfortunately, my seven-year-old brother suffers from severe asthma so he's been shielding at home, way before the lockdown was introduced. Luckily, he's been my guinea pig when I've been baking and I must say he's been a very satisfied customer.

It all started one day when I came across a YouTube video on how to bake a school jam cake. It looked so easy and appetizing. My tummy was rumbling and I was licking my lips at the same time, I knew I had to go to the kitchen straight away so I did. I gathered all the ingredients and made a start. I mixed my eggs, butter, sugar and flour together and my mixture was complete and it looked just like the one in the video. Although the kitchen looked like a bomb had exploded in it I didn't care after all it's all about experimenting. I was on the verge of becoming Shoreditch's next young baker.

I placed the mixture in the oven for 30 minutes. My mum checked the sponge after and told me it was cooked. We took it out to rest. I spread jam and drizzled coconut on top when it had cooled down. The first customer was given the biggest slice and his expression said it all, in silence the whole slice had vanished in his mouth. He smiled and gave me thumbs up. I was happy enough with the response for me to hand out takeaway pieces to my nearby relatives. My dad dropped off slices on their doorstep. I realised I had no cake left for myself but it didn't worry me I waited for their verdict on how it tasted

Within minutes my mum's mobile started to bleep. I just knew it was my relatives texting. Yummy, scrumptious, delicious, "can we have some more"? Now, these were just some of the many comments I received. I was overwhelmed with the response. I couldn't believe just how good they thought it tasted. It gave me the courage to carry on. This lockdown was the best I discovered a new talent that I never had.

The next few days I was in the kitchen for so many hours to come baking cakes, pizzas, cupcakes and even my own pizza sauce from scratch. I knew straight away I was the junior Jamie Oliver.

Year 8 Highly Commended

Never really apart - Amira Hayden

I have left my year behind. Even though it feels like I was never really gone as being stuck at home has taught me to become closer with my family in ways I couldn't have possibly imagined. All things happened for a reason and I know I have missed much but being stuck in this quarantine has taught me many things. I have opened up more and go to do some lovely activities with my family. As being a Muslim and Somali it's fun to have a wild family. In preparing to be a big sister (again) me and my mum have grown inseparable. My religion has taught me to be grateful for what I have and knowing that me and my family are healthy means everything to me. Also staying in quarantine in the month of Ramadan has been easy because I won't have to do things like PE because there is a 99.9% chance I will faint. I have been doing well in my studies and catching up on shows and movies on things like Disney + and Netflix. I'm surprised I'm alive I never thought I would be able to stay at home for that long.

When Miss Holden announced schools were closing I'm not gonna lie I was excited for more food, not having to wait for class to end to use the toilet and getting to watch all the shows I want. But it wasn't at all what I thought it would be. It gets boring at times but it's kind of like a big holiday without anywhere to go. There was this one time it was 3 days into quarantine I woke up at 6am and got ready in my uniform and my mom was awake and she asked me why I was in my uniform and I said "because I have school" and then she told me that it closed so I looked like a big fool and I couldn't go back to bed. I had an amazing birthday with my family. We made sure to wash our hands and not touch each other constantly. I do miss my teachers and peers but I know that if we all stay home and keep out of each other's ways. And only go out for necessary needs. We will fight this together. I think about it like we were never really apart.

Raisa Halim

Dear teachers and students,

How are you?

I do hope you are well and healthy. Please keep in routine and even though we may not be socializing as much as before it doesn't mean we have to be down. There is not a single person on earth who knew this virus would come. It surprised us and scientists who are still looking for a cure for this new virus. Many people have coronavirus and many people have unfortunately died but it is our job as a whole to save people by staying at home and social distancing. The fact that I cannot see my grandparents or anyone else breaks my heart. However, I still call them and facetime my cousins to see how they are doing. Before Eid one of my relative's cousin's grandpa died. So I mourn for him till now. I'm going to be honest life isn't the way it was and it isn't better. When I read the news or listen to the radio it's always something about coronavirus and now it feels quite overwhelming. I wonder when it will all stop. At least we have Google classrooms to stay in contact and there are lots of "stay in with" channels to listen or watch. My routine for the day is pretty much the same as school but at home. I've always wanted to be

homeschooled but not like this. Not when I take the first step in the morning and have to remember that the virus is everywhere in the atmosphere and that families have lost loved ones. Not like this. Never. Although it has only been 3 months for some reason it's like lockdown has been for 2 years. Whenever it does end and I really cannot wait to be free from our homes. Sometimes, my home feels like prison and it suffocates me. I think I can empathise with how birds feel in a cage now.

I'll try to say this as best as I can. Whatever happens we will do this together because we are a big family. A worldwide family. We have NHS who are our parents and nannies. We've got tv presenters who are our friends and we've got thankyou's which is what keeps our smiles up.

Do not worry because this harsh time will soon disappear like it never touched a soul. Probably in the future in some other generation this will be history. If I were to have one wish I think it would be to give a hug to earth.

Be happy and smile. Remember the memories we have and the ones we have all lost because this is the memory that you will always keep even if it's at the back of the mind.

I hope that people don't lose hope and if they do it's okay I don't blame you. It's okay to feel not okay in a time like this.

Before I say goodbye I'll leave you with some quotes.

"Everything is hard before it is easy"

"This time is precious hold it tight and don't let go"

"We might have silence but this is the time we must break it with the fear in us"

"You're never alone and I hope that you never dream that you are"

"Here we depend on the meanings we never knew existed"

"Patience will be the key even if you have found it already"

See you whenever lockdown and coronavirus will go away.

Yours sincerely,

Raisa Halim

Imran Miah

Since the school gates were officially shut down on Friday the 20th of March, the news became a shock, even to those who so badly wished for it. Thoughts were going around my head, how long will it be shut, will I ever come back? What will happen to my education?

Once I finally faced reality, during this time I was stuck in my dreamland, I took full control over my education. I attempted to catch up on previous assignments and waited patiently for new lessons to come. During the wait I planned my new daily structure and adjusted for what's to come.

Independence is something that always needed refining in my life and I believed this lockdown was an opportunity for me to do this. The first step to my independence was to self-teach, at first this was a difficult task at hand but I accomplished it in the end.

My positive drive has been my family from spending quality time with them to supporting each other to throughout the month of Ramadan. Also my biggest motivation was from my two older sisters as they always encourage me to progress in my learning.

I'm worried where this pandemic will take us in the future and when I will finally enter the schools gates. Being stuck at home prevents me from visiting places I could have visited if the pandemic had not struck. Many families may have lost loved ones or close friends so this will affect them in the future everyday. Although the pandemic has become normal, many individuals before quarantine had to prepare themselves mentally as they had to adjust to a new daily routine.

Year 8 Commended

Quarantine Changes - Aliya Choudhury

I remember the last days of school, I was thinking how I would cope with staying at home for such a long period of time and what I would do. I felt a bit worried about how much I would fall behind in school.

Quarantine began now every school day I check for what is being given and I usually do the things due the closest and after I do my work I do some baking or cooking as I really enjoy doing it and it takes away time also I like to do activities with my nieces and nephew and spend time with them.

A few days after it was Ramadan which I think was very different during lockdown usually I would be at school most of the week and it would take away a few hours of the day and I would pray with my friends but it has let me give more time to the religion. I would have more time to pray and read and help out with making food for iftar. And eid day would



usually mean lots of food and snacks meeting with family and friends and lots of fun, this eid was still lots of fun and food as I have a big family so it was not all so bad.

But there are some likes and dislikes. It is nice to have your own routine and your own pace on getting things done and also having a lot more free time to do lots of things. I almost feel more busy than before because of all the things I can do. My dislike is how I can't see any family or see my friends which

is not the best but it has to be done. This lockdown could help people find new hobbies and interests.

My life in Lockdown – Amaal Mohamed

When I first heard that we were going into lockdown I was worried but I had a glimpse of happiness since I knew that I would be safe. I was worried for my friends and teachers too since they were experiencing this too. I was mostly worried what I was going to do why we go back to school and I was super worried that I miss out on my learning. On the last day of school I looked around and saw people telling each other to stay safe. My last memory was when I was saying goodbye to my friends. I don't think that I was the only person that felt like this you could see it in the faces of other people. The atmosphere was a bit strange since many people have not experienced this before.

At the beginning of lockdown I had trouble getting used to it for a couple of weeks and also Google classroom but I finally got used to it. I just imagined that I was in school when I actually was at home. My family also tried to get used to it too. Once I finished my school work at 3.30 we would sit down at the table and play a nice family game.

I faced some challenges in lockdown. I had a massive struggle thinking when are we coming back to school and also not going outside. I miss going to school a lot.

One thing that keeps me happy during lockdown is staying with my family and communicating with my friends. We would have a time where we watch a film together or read stories. We would have a competition when we print out a wordsearch and have a competition who can finish the word search first.

Life in the future is going to be very different since people would try and social distance. I think that this experience will change people a lot because they will be very cautious and alert. I think that it has changed a bit of me too.

Aya Adel

Hi my name is Aya Adel and I am writing to you while I am in lockdown. Let me tell you a bit about my life since it has changed so much! So going into lockdown was very different

for me, it's like a very long summer holiday except we are not allowed to go outside. My last memory from going outside was the last time I went to school and that was the 27th of march! I remember at the end of the day we all said bye to our friends because we knew that we won't be seeing each other for a very VERY long time, it has almost been 3 month of being indoors and it's very hard because it's very hot outside and I don't have a garden so it's also a bit harder for me but I do have a balcony so sometimes I like to enjoy sitting in my balcony and having picnics with my little brother.

EID MUBARAK!!!! Yes, today is Eid and I am very happy! For Eid we had our first breakfast after a whole month fasting. We had Moroccan breakfast and it was very yummy. Also a few days before Eid me and my mum made some cookies and we also had that with Moroccan mint tea (called atay)

So today is the 1st of June and for the half-term last week I went to the park and it was the first time going outside so I was really happy. When we went out we went to get some Starbucks (I got a caramel Frappuccino). It was delicious and then me and my brother were playing. He was riding his bike and I was sitting on the picnic mat finally being able to breathe fresh air. I was very happy! Also long time bff came over to my house and we had so much fun and it was also the first time we have seen each other since lockdown and we were both very happy!

EID
MUBARAK



my

Today I haven't done much yet but it's currently 13:40 and I am not planning to do much today but I do have some homework which I don't really mind because I like to do it very fast!

Fahim Rahaman

My life in lock down made me realise how important school actually is!!!

At first, I thought lockdown was going to be super fun, there was no school, no waking up early every day, no having to cross the road and get on the bus with a sleepy eye. In the first week of lockdown I was really enjoying myself I had no school, I could sleep till how long I like, I could eat and drink whenever I want, I could play video games and watch TV all day.

But it was getting all boring, I finished all the series of the show, finished all games, and I couldn't even go out and felt really bad by hearing the amount of people are dying it was a really scary and worrying time for all of us. But then I started realising what school actually was, how school taught us things, how school helped us use our time in something useful, how school made our life so positive, how going to school kept us entertained, to be honest I don't think we would have realised how important school actually is if we didn't go into lockdown.

Thanks for reading.

Mehreen Chowdhury

When my school shut down because of the pandemic, I felt kind of relieved because I was worried when our school was allowed to shut down before anyone caught Covid - 19. At first, at home, it felt strange because I was at home, instead of doing school outside I had to do it inside. It was hard because I wasn't allowed to go to school, meaning I wouldn't be seeing my friends in a long time, my classmates and teachers. This also meant I could only go to my garden, instead of going outside like I normally would be.

Recently, my new routine is on the weekdays I wake up at 9am, I have breakfast and then I read for around 30 minutes. After that, I look at all my notifications I get for my school work and start doing a task. I make sure I try and hand in the assignments before they are due. After I've done 2 assignments in the morning, I take a break and watch YouTube for 30 minutes. I then help my younger brother do his assignments and hand them in. Around this time it would be 2 or 3 PM so I have my lunch which is normally rice. When I finish eating, I do my prayers and then read some pages of the Quran. Normally, after this I do another assignment and then go outside to the road to go bike-riding with my younger brother. I usually go bike-riding around 30-40 minutes daily. After this, I do my prayers and then help my younger brother read the sirfara (a smaller version of the Quran.) I then do some of my Arabic work I have from my Arabic school. Around this time it is usually 8 or 9 PM so I have my dinner and then read my book for a bit, then go to sleep.

During lockdown, the things I sometimes find difficult are still adjusting to the fact that we may have to be revising and doing online classes until September. Also the fact that sometimes it can be tiring doing the same things everyday. But then again, we did the same thing again and again back when we could go to school.

The things that I have enjoyed is taking this time to be closer to my parents and siblings. Even though, in Eid, we couldn't go outside to my relatives' houses or visit them we could still video call them and pretend they were actually with us. Another thing that I have enjoyed during lockdown is being able to be stress-free in a few things. Yes, we still have to do our lessons as usual, but without us continuously learning how are we supposed to succeed when we get back to school? But, I am happy that during this time I can avoid being over-stressed with work and think about the positive things that come out of this like being able to do your tasks wearing your pyjamas.

In the future, I plan to study in the medical field and be a doctor. As a Muslim, and during this pandemic, I have realised that I want to help people in their time of need just like the NHS are doing for us right now. I also want to become an Alimah for my religion which is to learn in depth more knowledge for your religion and also learn Arabic, Arabic grammar, Hadiths, Fiqh (Arabic Law) etc. My cousin also wants to become a doctor, which is helpful because she can always give me advice. I may not know what the future holds, I may not know if I can reach my goals but I do know that if I keep trying and if I have faith in Allah then anything is possible.

Teyha Reyad

Life in lockdown is intense as everyday we wait eagerly to hear when lockdown is over. Before the coronavirus pandemic everyone wished to have a long holiday however now we wish to go back to school. To be honest, I felt happy that school closed because I only thought it was for a few weeks. But I remain patient as my religion (Islam) teaches us to always have patience. Now I regret the feeling I had as we are stuck at home. Now every morning I wake up always having hope that today might be the day we get back to our normal lives. I would always do my homework in the morning and when I finished and caught up on any work I would then do extra curriculum activities with my siblings. This Ramadan was different as all the mosques were closed and I tried to keep myself busy by doing activities with my family. I am always hearing that people are dying and suffering which was sad. I have enjoyed spending quality time with my family as after lockdown this is what I will miss the most. In the future I hope to be a better person than before. Lockdown has made me a better person mentally and physically.

My lockdown experience – Zahra Rakib

I remember walking to class when my friend mentioned something to do with a virus outbreak. I was curious to know what she was talking about as I don't watch the news often. I didn't think much about the virus as it was in China, but then I heard that it started spreading. When the virus hit Europe, I remember always putting on hand sanitizer almost every time after a class was finished.

After a month or so, they were finally going to shut down the school. Half of me wanted to stay and half of me didn't. I really didn't want to do online school work because I know I would struggle because there is no teacher to help plus my mum doesn't really understand English properly. When quarantine started, I thought it would be fine, but no. Instead of waking up early, doing some online school work and the normal ordinary things I do, I would wake up late, feel so unbothered, and when I tried to do school work, often my computer would refuse to work for me.

I prefer normal school over online school even though I can just sit at home and do work. I prefer having a teacher tell me what to do instead of typing what to do because I'm the type of kid who has questions for almost everything so I find it hard to work. Other than school work, I have been going out shopping to buy things but when I do there's barely anything at the shops! We have to stand in this long queue 2 metres apart and only like 10 people are allowed or something.

I really hope quarantine is over because I don't like being stuck at home all day. The only good thing about quarantine is that I don't have to see people that I don't like as I'm the kind of person who doesn't really like being around people and like being alone or with just friends or family.

Year 9 Winners

Yusra Mohamed

Lockdown

It's as if the world has shut down,
The cherry blossoms petals run near my windows
And I eagerly watch,
knowing full well I can't step out of the door.

Lockdown is a new feeling,
It's like I don't have to do anything
and two months have flown by.
It's as if each day was a drop in the ocean
and you only realised how many days have passed but yet -
each day feels like it's in slow motion.

There's a lot of fear hidden amongst these homes,
Families wondering when they can safely step outside the door
I think about those in abusive homes
And I think about those who have to step out the door...

It's as if the whole world is at a standstill and everyday we hear the same:
Lockdown may go on up until September or November but nevertheless it's the same
More people are dying but there are still a lot of people surviving
Many people during this time keep themselves occupied
See sometimes I have to go outside
But only when it's necessary because
I can respect the people fighting on the frontlines.
It's like no one trusts each other and everyone gives tight-lipped smiles
But every Thursday night I smile
Because everyone claps,
acknowledging the facts.

I took going outside as a right not a privilege
And the thing that makes me want to go outside is wanting to feel normal
And wanting to continue my "daily life"
I'm personally fine right now
I'm starting to see communities come together
Families spending more time together
But something I realised
Is that the coronavirus is still on everyone's mind.

Josiah Jonathon Burdsell

Going into lockdown, I was still very positive, I had underestimated the effect that the virus would cause. I remember thinking that the lockdown period would last a month at most, it

was the atmosphere at school that started to change things for me. I remember hearing some classmates asking us all to come to school on the final day because they wouldn't see each other again for many months. The atmosphere as a whole was weird, the year elevens preparing for this to be their final day, the abrupt way in which we left. On my way home, I thought I would be happy, cutting school short, leaving two weeks early, yet I just felt numb, not quite sad, just numb. Later that day, I went to pick up my younger sister from her primary school, on the way back I stopped at the store to buy myself some pop, to my shock, the only thing that seemed to be available was the pop I wanted, the shelves were completely starved of food. It was after this day that I felt less optimistic about the situation.

During the first few days of lockdown, I didn't really set any goals for myself, I just carried on with my life. I remember that I didn't go outside for a week, before I eventually did. It felt good to be outside again. I don't feel like I really made any drastic changes in my life, I decided to do school work at 2:30, and after dinner, besides that, I didn't really do much with my life. While I wasn't worried about myself, I did fear for my grandparents, especially my 94 year old great grandma, who is living in a nursing home, I also worried about them as they wouldn't be able to go outside much as they needed to avoid the virus. I don't recall feeling positive during the start of lockdown, I had to eat and drink less to work with the smaller amount of food we had, even the lack of football seemed sad, but I am much more positive now, especially since we may soon return to the normal lifestyle.

I never thought I would be saying this, but I miss school, honestly. I would much rather be doing work at school than at home. School was part of my normal life, work at home is just annoying, it feels like we should be on a break, but we aren't. Overall, I don't feel like my family hasn't struggled too much, despite the shortage of food early on in lockdown, we haven't faced many problems, we have each other, and online things, though sometimes glitchy and hard, really aren't that bad. I guess that one thing that annoyed me was my friends in America who complained about being stuck in their homes, and not being able to go to the park, their backyards are the size of a normal park, and their houses are massive compared to ours, I guess I am really just jealous of what I don't have. It has been helpful to be able to talk to people online, and from a distance. It feels a little different, but still useful.

There are plenty of things that have kept me positive. Going outside and biking around London has helped me remain happy. I like the new experience of biking in the city compared to the small farming town I lived in before. I am also positive because I know that even if I get the virus, my chances of survival are almost guaranteed. I think overall the thing that has helped me the most is my faith, I am never alone in Christ. It is something that has helped me when I struggled leaving my friends, I felt empty, yet I was never alone. Keeping in touch with my friends has also helped me out, I have been keeping in touch with my friends in America for almost a year now, so it was nothing out of the ordinary to talk to people online.

In conclusion, things haven't been easy, yet I remain hopeful. I have Christ, I have friends, and things are starting to open back up. Lockdown was a new experience, but so was moving to London. Life is often surprising, but we as humans are resilient, we will find a way through this lockdown. This will soon be a memory to look back on and maybe smile to myself.

Year 9 Highly Commended

Anonymous

When school closed in March 2020, I didn't feel scared or worried about the pandemic that has affected our country and worldwide because it wasn't at that stage yet. When I found out we were going into lockdown it started to frighten me because it reminded me of shield or protecting yourself from a threat like during a war.

I remember on the last day of school everyone was feeling mixed emotions; some were glad that there was no more school until further notice and others were upset about not seeing their friends at school. At that time, many of us underestimated the lockdown and we thought that it would be a little extra holiday. But it's not. The atmosphere on the last day of school was joyful and fun, as we knew we wouldn't see each other for a long time. Personally, I didn't think it would become this severe at the time. On the last day of school, our teachers planned a relaxing and less intense lesson than usual, which many of us enjoyed. When we were heading home from the last day of school, there were tears from some people as we all knew it would be a long time until we saw each other again.

When the lockdown rule was activated, it felt weird to be confined in your home for the majority of the day. To be honest, the first few weeks were like a little holiday that we usually get every term. I decided that I would continue learning how to play the guitar and the piano because I stopped learning at the start of year 9. My whole family has decided to advance in their hobbies or skills; my mother and sister decided to bake and cook meals and deserts. I promised myself that I would not forget topics that we learnt at school and reduce my knowledge as I know that will have a huge impact when I go back to school. However, I have been quite relaxed during the first phase of lockdown, as the consequences did not come to my mind at the time.

During the entire lockdown, I have found it hard to focus entirely on my work for a couple of hours as there are many distractions every day that I face, which changes my focus so I'm not learning in the correct way. But I have divided my time so I can do different things at different times of the day. For example: chores, studying, exercise, and playing the piano and guitar. What I miss about school is the environment of learning and being yourself. School is a part of our lives and it is like that part of our life has been put on hold. It has been quite hard not being able to socialise with friends or teachers, and seeing the same faces 24/7.

What keeps me positive during these times is my family. Even though we can't meet extended family, the use of technology helps us to communicate whilst seeing each other. We've all had a laugh on the phone and done fun things at home but it is still hard staying home all day and not having a social life. I call people from extended family every day and it is almost the same, like having them right next to us, but it is hard getting used to it. Every day, I am filled with joy, comfort and warmth from the people around us and I am glad that I am surrounded by these people every day during this pandemic. Every day it may seem like things are getting worse and this can dampen one's dreams or thoughts

but one day the sun will come out again and everything will go away. But until then stay positive.

Abdiraman Nur Mohammed

At the beginning, I thought of lockdown as a horrific nightmare. Walking out of the school doors with no plans for the weekend. I remember coming home and putting my school clothes in the wash, not knowing when I was going to wear them again. That same day I had to wear a mask to the supermarket, something I thought was never going to happen in my life. Driving past Bethnal green road two hours after school had finished with no students in sight really showed that the situation was more serious than anyone had thought.

Beginning lockdown was frightening for me. Seeing the death and cases figures constantly rising made me think this wasn't real life. Occasionally, I used to daydream and think we were in an apocalypse. It all just felt like a dream. Wake up and then what do you do? Schoolwork, movies and games gets boring after 6 hours. Before lockdown started I was kind of excited by the thought of staying up late since there would be no school. However, once lockdown began that became pointless. My boredom reached a point where I began cleaning my room 5 times a day! I never dreamt of that ever happening.

There have been many challenges for me in lockdown particularly the fact of not seeing anyone except my parents and siblings. The 'social distancing' rule really gets in my head sometimes, especially when I think about how we used to eat lunch all next to each other and sit in lessons together. The thought of not seeing your friends and talking to them through gaming or social media is quite tough, especially if you're used to seeing them everyday.

However, now that we've gone a bit deeper into lockdown, I am starting to enjoy it. Relaxing in bed and watching movies, playing new games with my friends while still doing work is practically heaven. No rush in the morning to get to school on time or constantly having to look for your missing uniform has made me enjoy lockdown much more. Right now I am practically taking lockdown as a holiday - while still doing the work!

Fabiha Rahman

Dear Future Fabiha,

I hope you are well. I am writing this letter to you because I want to tell you that you are strong and vigorous and that you have made it through a global pandemic. This was not easy because, due to lockdown, you had to stay away from friends and family. However, you will see what you have achieved through this quarantine.

In the beginning, I felt miserable as I could not see my friends and teachers and that it would be my first time doing online work, and that it might be a bit difficult to submit my work and ask questions if I needed to. I remember my last religious study lesson with some of my closest friends on 19th March 2020 and, as I was looking around, I felt

downhearted to not be coming to school the next day. However, I felt a bit excited to spend more time with my family.

Firstly, my family felt weird about going into lockdown, as it was a massive change, but we were all excited as we could spend more time together. I felt unfortunate that I could not visit my friends and family, go shopping with my mum and visit my nan which I would do nearly every week. Nevertheless, the week before lockdown, we visited my nan which was a delight.

My plan for lockdown was that I made a timetable to stick to which was a very good thing. I also made a diary so I can look back to what I did everyday. The thing that I was glad about was that I did not have to wake up early in the morning for school which was great!!!! When you think about 2020, you may instantly think of the dark times, the number of deaths and not being able to see friends, family and feeling isolated in this dark little world. However, it gave an opportunity to learn new skills such as: cooking, baking and calligraphy.

At first the online google classroom was hard but then the teachers helped me and it became easy. I then really enjoyed it as I stuck to the timetable I made and got all the work done on time. My teachers marked it and gave feedback, they actually looked at it. The feedback allowed me to improve my work and feel more confident. It was like we were learning as normal but with no classroom. I missed seeing my friends and the teachers. Also, learning in the classroom.

Finally, the thing that keeps me positive is sticking to my timetable and reading quotes. The way I keep in touch with my family and friends is that we talk through WhatsApp. In addition, we facetime daily with my closest family. Due to lockdown, I have been especially close to one of my aunts who live far away because we text everyday; we keep in touch and play games. I always beat them because I am the champion, as they say, and I play board games and different types of games with my family.

In addition, it was Ramadan in lockdown and it was a bit easier to do as we did not have to go outside as much and we could self-reflect more. Furthermore, it was my birthday in lockdown!!!! I thought it was going to be boring as no one would come but, in the end, I received a lot of birthday presents from my family and neighbours, but they did not come inside. I was elated at the end. It was one of my best birthdays, even though no one came, that I enjoyed with my family!!!! It was a lovely birthday!!!! Alright, I am going to stop writing for now. Well done for staying resilient at difficult times. Always remain positive.

P.S. Do not forget to have fun, even through difficult times and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely,
Younger Fabiha

Year 9 Commended

Anonymous

Me, Myself and lockdown?

Lockdown has been... interesting. At first, the idea of lockdown seemed like a nightmare because it meant that not only would I not be able to see my friends but it also meant I would have to spend a long time with my two brothers! However, lockdown did make me bond with them more.

In all honestly, I didn't think lockdown would change me that much. If you think about it, it's just like a long holiday except you have to stay inside your home and can only make physical contact with the people you live with. However, lockdown has made me appreciate the little things, like transportation. Furthermore, it's also made me appreciate being able to see people other than my family, which is weird coming from an introvert. Don't get me wrong, I still love the satisfaction of a social event being cancelled, but I miss being able to see my friends and other people.

Being in lockdown has overall made me realise something important – in school, teachers have always talked about mental health and its importance, but I never really felt that it concerned me. But lockdown has been mentally challenging for everyone. So, I guess, overall, lockdown isn't a total nightmare. It made me realise important things, things about me.

Anonymous

When I had first learnt that school was going to be closed because of Coronavirus I was actually happy, not upset, as I wanted a break for a while. A lot of people were saying that quarantine was only going to be for two weeks and I had also thought that, so when Boris Johnson labelled the time for lockdown as 'ambiguous' I was quite surprised and worried.

After an entire month had passed, I was getting incredibly bored. Without having much to do other than playing games and watching repetitive videos on YouTube, what I had thought was fun before became almost like a burden. I then realized after a couple weeks that I was free and had a lot of time so I started working on time-consuming projects: helping out my parents in the garden, trying to be productive, reading books and a lot of other things.

Staying at home has enabled me to live a better, healthier life style as when I am in school, I don't get enough sleep (sometimes my fault).

Overall lockdown has not been as bad as I initially thought it would be, but I would really like to get back to school in year 10.

Muhammad Iyaad Islam

I knew that lockdown was going to be very tough from the first day I heard about it. People were very happy about it, but I definitely was not. I remember the last day of school. I was just kind of sad that this was already the end of the year and we were just getting closer to GCSE. I remember just saying 'bye' and handshaking people, then I got on the bus and haven't seen them since. It was a depressing atmosphere at the time. Very depressing.

At the beginning of lockdown, I was just concerned about when it would be over and the number of deaths and new cases of the virus.

The challenge of lockdown for my family is probably keeping us kids entertained because we get really bored and fed up so we start getting cranky, not going to lie. What I miss about school most is probably having a teacher to help and teach me stuff that I am now learning at home by myself. Along with that, probably seeing friends as well.

What keeps me positive is knowing that I can sleep in for as much time as I like, unlike if I have school and have to wake up early. I find hope in believing that this will all be over by the time we know and things will be back to normal soon (cough, cough, not likely). I have kept in touch with friends over social media and PS4 but that's it really.

Zaqwan Hassan Choudhury

As we went into lockdown a range of emotions flooded my mind, leaving me confused in a sea of uncertainty, confusion and with a hint of concern. On the last day of school, I kept positive and had a great time with my friends, knowing that I might not see them for weeks or even months. Going into lockdown, teachers were supportive and helped me go through my emotions.

During lockdown I've felt that one challenging thing has been not being able to see my family and only seeing them from two meters away or on a video call from the phone. This was extremely difficult especially during Eid a time where we are meant to celebrate with families. However, we had to stay away.

I feel that knowing that at one point the everything will slowly go back to normal helps me get through lockdown because it gives you one guaranteed thing that's going to happen for the better.

Saima Hussain

My experience of lockdown has been very isolated and anti-social. To be honest, the first week of lockdown wasn't very hard for me. It felt like a week-long holiday only that I couldn't socialise outside my household. The second week of lockdown, the questions started flooding in, I started thinking how long will we stay home for, how long will my education be paused, and how will it affect me? Uncertain of my future, I only knew one thing: to keep safe and clean. Stuck at home, I had nothing to do other than homework

and watch TV. I had lots of plans this year: to go on holiday, to go out with my friends and study. All of them have been stopped.

Now, falling into the 3rd week of lockdown, the fear set in. Things are very different now and won't be back to normal for a very long time. Lives have been lost and shops are closed. You would think this is a story from a movie, but everything was still, yet the air was filled with panic. Our city, our country, our world has been turned from lively streets into a deserted ghost town. I guess I can call myself lucky because my family hasn't been badly hit by the virus. We have enough food to eat for all of us and we have a garden to breathe in the fresh air, whereas others have not been so lucky. Today, still stuck at home, with my mind filled with boredom and worry, I still do not know what is to come.

Mas'ud Omar Mohamed Sharif

Staying home for days, weeks and months. This virus has impacted us in many aspects of our lives. Staying home. Social distancing. Online meetings and classes. Will this be the 'new normal'? Huge numbers of activities put to a stop. Although I don't have GCSE exams this year, there are many who have been preparing for this exam for years that have lost the opportunity to prove their knowledge and skills through the exam. For the past few weeks in lockdown, it was up to technology to get classes running. Meeting up with friends is no longer an option, but for how long?

Frightened we might get infected; everyone is staying inside with some exceptions. People dying and getting buried without you saying bye to them or even seeing them ever again. I am sure that if everyone listens to medical advice, we could wave bye-bye to this disease.

The NHS, the army and the police are all standing in the fight, knowing they could defeat the virus with resilience, patience and bravery, risking their lives for humanity. Whether we have been infected or not, the majority of us have been affected financially or mentally. The public plays a big role in keeping the virus under control by distancing from each other. Are we going to defeat it or is it going to tear our community apart forever? This global pandemic is our beast and we should all strive as a world to defeat it with the help of the NHS. We are all in this and we will do our best and we will defeat this catastrophic Coronavirus!

Covid- 19 Outbreak - Mahir Chowdhury

It was two weeks before the government was planning to enter lockdown. Everyone was excited about not going to school but, at the same time, sad to not see our friends for a long time. The atmosphere was as if the summer holiday had started but would be very different, due to not going outside. When the government strictly said: only go out for essential things like food or exercise, which was great for me because of the fact that I really liked to play video games with my friends. However, I also like to go bike riding with my friends which I couldn't do any more.

As days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, I was starting to have fewer things to do at home and I began to miss my daily routine of going to school and doing

normal things. I didn't think I would be feeling like this at the beginning of lockdown. I thought it would be like a holiday but I had to cut out going to my loved ones' houses and had to only see them virtually which I wouldn't do on a normal holiday. I was starting to think that this was no holiday but an actual pandemic for the whole earth, which is terrifying to think of because people are dying and we don't know if you or one of our family members could be next.

One good thing that the schools have done is set homework online which has helped my mental health and academic progress. I had something new to do rather than play PlayStation.

One beneficial thing about lockdown was the month of Ramadan for Muslims. Normally fasting going to school would be exhausting but due to staying at home it was a lot easier. On the other hand, it was hard not enjoying breaking our fast together with my extended family and celebrating Eid like we normally would. The thing that kept me going was talking to my friends and playing online games with them. This not only helped me from not getting bored but also with fasting long hours too. Furthermore, I hope that this Pandemic will change people's mindset for the better. I hope that people will be more appreciative, people will think before wasting food and wasting things in general due to the fact we saw how it was to be short of essentials like toilet roll, pasta etc.

The only thing in my mind is, will this virus be defeated? I hope that this time next year we will be living our lives normally and that scientists can find a cure for deadly diseases like the coronavirus and stop this in time before more epidemics happen. Also, it should be a compulsory for all schools in the world to teach and carry out environmental project like planting trees, even curfew for certain days not to use cars so that we have clean air especially in London because London is very polluted. That way, if a pandemic was to happen, we would have a better chance of survival as we would be healthy.

Zaid Fakhir Ahmad

First of all, you are not lucky, and yet you are. Yes, you are all losing out on crucial learning time yet you are learning in the comfort of your own homes. Be grateful you have a roof above your head and you have a family to support you. I am in year 9, going into year 10, bored in lockdown just like you. This is where I am not so lucky. I have mocks coming up and I may have forgotten a lot of important things in many subjects and need to revise as home-school will not give you and I a full learning experience. However, in school you have that opportunity, not only yourself to rely on, and you have your friends so you can have fun at the same time.

You are bored in lockdown and other than you doing school work you're either binge-watching Netflix or playing on your PS4 and on your other devices. No matter how much you want to go outside you are very limited in where you go. You either go to the park, play some football while social distancing or you ride your bike.

The struggle is real, so make the most of your lockdown instead of just finding something good to watch which there never is anymore. Go make a cake or cook with your family. Go do some exercise and it will keep your mind off things.

Abid Alam Joy

On the last day of school, I didn't know what I was feeling. I think my feelings were too mixed to distinguish one from the other. However, there was a sad atmosphere in the school I suppose. We all told each other that we would miss each other, but that didn't really help. I didn't see anyone break down into tears, I didn't either. That's only because we knew we were going to see each other again, surely. If we were the year 11s, we would have definitely shed a few tears. In the end it wasn't too bad for me. I didn't get to say goodbye to everyone, but it was like leaving for the summer holiday. A long summer holiday.

I don't actually remember the first day of lockdown, I've forgotten the date. However, I do remember lying in bed and thinking about lockdown. I didn't really do anything on the first day. I think I said to myself that lockdown won't be too bad, and it isn't. I mean, I'm pretty lucky I have a nice family, a roof over my head, and food on my plate. Some people have it a lot worse. I didn't really have much to do so I just did schoolwork. My family did the same, apart from my parents. My parents focused on reinforcing their religious beliefs and learning more about Islam. I followed suit, along with my sisters.

There haven't been many challenges to lockdown. I would say the hardest thing is not going outside. When it's the middle of summer, staying inside will be like trying to cool off in an oven. I do miss people at the school though.

Something that keeps me positive is my family. Especially my little brother. Without him the house would be extremely quiet. Extensive periods of quiet are not good. I think my brother has kept me sane. I also think that Ramadan has really helped keep me to stay engaged during lockdown. Ramadan has been easier because I don't have to travel anywhere and I don't have to be doing physical activities in school while fasting. This means I can read the Qur'an more as well. We don't have any strategies to stop being bored. We just live like it's a normal day. We know it's not a normal day or even time. However, we just keep going.

Anonymous

So far this year, 2020, has been crazy and many things have happened that are now going to be history. First of all I want to say that I am currently in quarantine and school doesn't re-open until September. Now let's start talking from the beginning of 2020. January 26th 2020 Kobe Bryant and Gianna Maria-Onove Bryant died in a helicopter crash. This broke my heart since I love playing basketball but most people don't know. The next thing is COVID-19 breakout. This is the scariest thing.

All schools have been closed since March 20th. It's been like four months since I've gone to school, outside of my house, and seen my friends and family. I have missed three of my friend's birthdays and I don't think I'll be able to spend my birthday with them. I really miss my friends. During this quarantine I have been doing school-work online and it is sometimes stressful. However, when I am stressed because of school I put it aside and

start drawing whatever comes into my mind or how I feel. I've also been doing drawing based on some songs and their lyrics.

Year 10 Winners

A New World - Amal Mohamed

The world is ending. School has shut, the teachers pulling all of you into an assembly that felt like a conversation made of goodbyes, the year elevens branding each other with sharpies and tears. You, not having missed out on the finale of your years here, will look at it cynically. You have not lost much, a few assessments and such but nothing of dire importance, if anything it's just a few lunchtimes with friends you've missed out on. But you'll be sure to make it all up when you get back. This is where you will begin to dream of a different time, where a different set of circumstances had occurred, you were not laying in your bed surrounded by duvets and pillow-talk of 'in a week or so ...'. You never know why the end of the sentence doesn't stick, like the words fall apart as if climbing stairs that disappear halfway. The future just doesn't seem real, like you have always been here and here, always, will you stay.

You will try and put together a new life, one where your bed is home, your stairs the daily commute and the kitchen your workplace. You're working 9-5 as a news-watcher with a side job as the local complainer, it's tough but you make it work, sometimes being a 12-hour sleeper to make ends meet. The window is now your break, a sour vacation, if you will, where the streets once piled with bankers, bakers, school kids, gymnasts, care workers and nurses are now empty. This world is now a barren wasteland, where people are scarce and hobbies are scarcer. This new life is decaying, its lungs reeking of improbable possibilities, its fingertips numb and heavy. There is nothing to keep your mind at bay now, you are here with your thoughts and your thoughts are here with you.

This is the end of the world and you have nothing but false hope and a flimsy calendar filled with cold days, merging into a continuous sleep, with your eyes wide open.

Year 10 Highly Commended

The Growth of the Coronavirus - Anonymous

I was told only a few days before the final day, 20th March 2020, that I wouldn't be going to school anymore. I was told that no one knows when we will be coming back and that life wouldn't be normal for a long time. I remember the last day of school: confused and hopeless as the coronavirus grew and spread like the gush of wind wiping out everything we all enjoyed and took for granted. The last day of school was a horrifying experience, sitting down in my last lesson, looking around the class. Lots of students have not been coming in on these last few days. The thought of my last lesson and saying my last

goodbyes to friends was very emotional. As it was the last few days, me and a friend talked about how we might not be in year 10 the next time we see each other.

I remembered the first time I found out about the coronavirus. It was in form; we were watching Newsround and I saw how badly other countries were affected. Little did I know that we would be in the same state a few weeks later. I saw my school slowly preparing for a shutdown and I didn't believe it. We got our Google Classroom logins and we got packs of work, yet it didn't seem real. As a student who's doing their GCSEs next year it was nerve-racking to have to miss out on my lessons and not doing my mocks to prepare me for next year. I'd also miss the chance to complete my first work experience, but I'm grateful that I'm not in year 11 and I didn't miss out on my chance to do my exams. I hoped that I would return back to school for my last year.

Going into lockdown was a filled with terror: being locked at home for months, not being able to go out freely. Being at home, having to do work online and submitting it to our teachers was strange. I was aware that my results may be affected by this lockdown, and I have to set goals to do my best to keep up my learning at home.

Once I'd heard about coronavirus creating a world pandemic, I knew that I couldn't do much. The best I could do was stay home. I was speechless and I've never come across such a deadly virus in my lifetime. After hearing about lockdown, I knew life wouldn't be normal and going out of your house would be a great risk for me and my whole family. I wouldn't enjoy myself on the Easter holiday like I usually would. My family already had a planned trip to Dubai for the Easter holiday for a week and it's been cancelled. My hopes had been let down. My mum still had to go out to work, it's a worrying time and I wished it was a bad dream. Fear haunts everyone that goes out of their homes and who knows when it will all be over.

I've been at home for almost a month and seeing the daily numbers of cases and deaths rising and rising. The graph drawn to represent the statistics couldn't even go any steeper than it already had. The feeling of thousands of people dying from this was daunting and my nerves let out a tingling shiver every time I came across the death numbers.

During this challenging time I've missed being around my friends and cousins and not being able to see them like I always used to. As the month of Ramadan was approaching, I could feel that it wouldn't be the cheerful month it's always been. I've never felt so dejected, but I tried to make the most of being at home. This Ramadan had been different and although we couldn't go out, I tried to find a spark of happiness inside me because I wouldn't get this month until another year. I still fasted and at least I had family to break my fast with. Eid also came around and I'd never had an Eid like this before. I stayed at home and we didn't dress up and go to relatives houses and we didn't take pictures either. It was more like a normal day at home.

My uncle would come round sometimes to drop off food, maintaining a social distance, since we couldn't go to their house. It was upsetting how family couldn't even visit our house, neither could we go to theirs, not even for Eid or Ramadan. There wasn't much I could do at home and I missed the times you didn't have to think twice before touching your face and how you didn't need to worry about going outside and eating from restaurants.

Although during this pandemic we couldn't do much for Eid, I was lucky to facetime the people I missed and still feel a sense of togetherness. I am grateful for the times I laughed and made jokes with my family and friends. I felt hope. I know there will be an end to this and there will be a day where everyone can feel relief. I know that there will be another Eid and another Ramadan where I will enjoy myself and be appreciative for everything I come across. This lockdown has taught me to be thankful for everything from now on. I've realised school wasn't just a place of learning, but it was a place of happiness where students could socialise with people of their own age. A place where we can interact spending our day doing what humans have always done. Being around the comfort of our friends and having our teachers beside us whenever we need help, it feels as if it's been forever since we left. It was school that made every student have a fixed routine and be disciplined. I took school for granted and loads of other things I used to eat, visit and do on a daily basis. Now living life differently has created a sense of realism, how I was really lucky to not panic or feel trauma about a situation affecting the whole world.

Ebenezer Million-Kassa - Letters from Lockdown

Well I guess we are all lucky in some way as we didn't catch the virus that has killed many lives across the globe. Lockdown is something I will never forget. It has affected everyone's lives as people need to do work from home even though they might feel unmotivated but... WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. My plans for Easter and Summer have been cancelled and now it is just revision. Now, everything is Lockdown but it is calm, you will get used to it after 4 days, and it will be like a daily routine. First, I do my revision, then I relax and later play my PS4 with my brother. Occasionally, we might walk for exercise as a family so we can relax our minds, away from our Google classroom work and revision. Quarantine is just really the same as school at home but better.

There are benefits and disadvantages of this Lockdown. But you have got to think it on the bright side, and just let time pass while you're still doing school work. If you are not motivated, the thing that is motivating me is that this all will affect my career in the future if I don't work hard enough.

The question is: have fun now and regret it in the future or work hard and be grateful?

Year 10 Commended

Sara Shah

To Future Me,

2020's been a wild year. I don't know if you remember but maybe this letter will help you to. School closed halfway through the year, you didn't see your friends for 10 weeks+, Ramadan was spent in lockdown with not even one iftar at Nan's house. After Ramadan, we had Eid of course, a weird and different Eid, but one everyone will probably remember.

For now, weird is the new normal but it's okay. The deaths are lowering by the day and we'll be allowed out without any restrictions before we know it.

I just want to say well done for getting through this, leaving the house only six times in 10 weeks is not easy.

Goodbye.
15 year old me
03.06.2020

Anonymous

Dear Reader,
I'm going insane because I'm missing my education. I'm going insane because I can't see my friends. I'm going insane because I can't play my favourite sport. I'm going insane because I'm unprepared for my GCSEs. I'm going insane from boredom. I'm going insane because I didn't cause this. I'm going insane.

Year 12 Winners

Dark Skin Girl - Catia Djalo Camara

Tears are streaming down the Dark Skin Girl's face,
Pain is streaming down the Dark Skin Girl's face,
Disappointment is streaming down the Dark Skin Girl's face.
Her skin glistens, her melanated skin glistens in the sunlight, moonlight
but pain streams down the Dark Skin Girl's face.
No sense of validity in her heart,
No sense of love in her heart,
No sense of pride in her heart.
Her hurt from society's words resonates in her soul
but stays trapped within the layer between ignorance and morality
which holds society together.

Dark Skin Girl's self-esteem is decreasing, and no-one cares.
I wish we knew how beautiful we are,
I wish we knew how our hair defies gravity,
I wish we knew how our skin reflects the sun,
leaving a sun-kissed honey glow
resonating throughout society.
I wish we knew all of this but how can we even –

We are trapped in lockdown with no way out,
No way out, a constant on-going battle with ourselves.
We stare into the mirror screaming, feeling suffocated.
The mirror doesn't reflect back the hate that society unleashes upon the Dark Skin girl,
The mirror doesn't lie,

The mirror reflects back
the beauty, the beauty that has been forgotten about,
the beauty that isn't recognised,
the beauty that is demonised,
the beauty that is so hated.

Tears stream down the Dark Skin Girl's face as she remembers the painful memories,
the painful memories which were shoved back into her head,
she remembers how her skin complexion brought her so much sorrow,
she remembers how people would taunt her for her complexion,
she remembers the anxiety which suffocated her making her
forget her beauty and believing the lies which she was force-fed.

However, lockdown has taught her that inner beauty overpowers hate,
lockdown has taught her how her melanin absorbs the sunlight leaving an everlasting
glow,
lockdown has taught her how she doesn't need to seek validity from anyone.

Pride is gleaming upon the Dark Skin Girl's face,
Beauty is gleaming upon the Dark Skin Girl's face.

Hussain Mahmud Tamim

My end of the first part of a new chapter in life.
(I said new chapter because I am in sixth form so it's new to me)
(And as it's coming towards the first year of sixth form that's my 'end FIRST part')

My, oh my, 6 months has passed so quickly in my first year in sixth form. The thought of me being in the second year of sixth form was creeping up on me but also at the same time I wanted to get it over and done with.

So, since February started, I was rather stressing out even more, seeing as my exams were due to be in two months, so obviously pressure levels were rising. More studying, more hard work and dedication, less time taking things slow and easy. During the time period of the second half of February, a certain news item began sparking around the whole world that sounded quite concerning. What I first heard was about a disease called coronavirus. This illness started to unfurl and spread through the whole of China's nation, because that's where the disease was first heard from. You could literally hear the whispers and social media popping off about this topic every now and then. But then, as the days and weeks went by, the mass of the disease's population has been soaring all around the world and that's when it became a red alert for everyone.

It led to such tragic outcomes: deaths mounting all around the world because of this virus. Lockdowns were taking place for weeks, specifically three months. No-one was allowed to go out for anything. When lockdown was first announced for some countries, everywhere was panic, manic mode. This virus had everyone speaking about cleaning themselves properly and washing hands etc. so everyone was battling their way into stores, buying hand sanitizers, soaps etc. and it was just utter chaos.

After this, a shortage of food took place so again panic mode set in to shopping when buying food. It was quite emotional actually because the elderly struggled so much with getting food and in such a crisis a lot of people were just being so selfish. Work was meant to be done at home and school closed. With this taking place, all exams were cancelled until further notice. There were a mix of reviews about that some didn't like it, some did. A number of loved ones have died and it was so distressing for everyone because they weren't able to see those who had passed away.

Now, into April. I am a teenage Muslim boy, British Bangladeshi, so Ramadan came by but this time it felt so quick yet very different. We wouldn't be able to go out and do our nightly prayers at the Mosques and we spent Ramadan at home, not at school, so everything about it: the environment and the atmosphere and the vibes were very mismatched. Now, even though I'm a Muslim, I still had strong faith in my lord above that things will be alright.

My faith about religion etc. is really strong so I didn't hesitate and pray and pray and pray to the Lord above. Then came Eid day. Normally during Eid, we would go to the mosque really early morning like, 6-ish, and pray our Eid prayer and listen to an Eid sermon, but this year that was not possible. We had to pray at home and everything just felt off and not right. Obviously we weren't happy about this but, like I mentioned before, my faith in my religion did not stop. Over the course of the three months under lockdown, the deaths and cases of this deadly virus have caused a major impact on every aspect of everyone's life. But these last few weeks the numbers have gone down, much lower than before. Seeing as these numbers were decreasing, the lockdown then began to ease off. Openings of shops, a few schools and work placements; everyone was allowed to go out just not in big groups. Oh, and also, with this virus that has taken control, it has made everyone socially stay away from each other, specifically two meters apart. It has now reached on to this day. Still I am at home, still I am doing work that the school teachers are setting us to do online. With this whole situation I felt quite livid because my exams were meant to be during May but, now this whole malarkey happened, I have to cram in more studying and learning for year 13 as well as doing uni applications. I have to do another eight coursework units and four exam units next year so I was so annoyed by all that plus resits for English. But at the end of the day, I'm going to try my hardest and do the best of my ability and what's going to be done is going to be done.