

23 July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have made it! Whilst the last academic year felt disrupted, what with the first national lockdown that caused many students to miss the entire Summer term, in many ways this year has felt even tougher as there have been so many twists and turns along the way. I can't thank you enough for all your support throughout this period. With the Covid testing (in school and at home); wearing of face masks; the chaos before Christmas when so many had to self-isolate, followed by another lengthy lockdown and the switch to remote learning; and then the gradual return back to school – the school community has been amazing, both students and their families, in the way you have supported us in such a positive manner throughout. And it has been great to finally repay all this support by starting to offer more and more of the opportunities to students that they enjoy, and which play such a part in the culture and ethos of the school.

Last week the Performing Arts and PE departments ran a series of mini 'UFF-fests' at lunchtime for each year group with students able to join in with a whole range of activities. And this week we have been able to run a comprehensive programme of activities and trips as part of our Activities Week. With the inclusion of Year 10 in this year's programme alongside the other year groups this really was the single largest week we have put on with over 800 students taking part (and only one minor hiccup when we had to call off the Uffculme Challenge for Years 8 and 9 due to concerns around the heat). Seeing the students in school and coming off buses laughing, with big smiles and great memories, means that it really has started to feel like 'old Uffculme'. And to cap it all on Tuesday evening we were able to meet up again with all of Year 11 as they finally got their Prom – it was great to see them in all their finery and to join with them in celebrating their 5 years at Uffculme.

However, the main purpose of this letter is to update you on some changes for next year and in particular the start of the year. To help find the information I have blocked the rest of the letter into sections.

Start of the Year

We have been asked by the Department for Education to complete a series of on-site Covid tests with all year groups as they return back in September (much as we did in March when students first returned back from the lockdown). This is to try and ensure that each school can start the school year with as much confidence as possible that it is a safe and 'Covid-free' community. For this to happen we will need to slightly stagger the start of the September term as follows:

Years 7 and 10

- Initial Covid Testing will take place on Friday 3rd September
- Students will start back in school from Monday 6th September

Years 8 and 11

- Initial Covid Testing will take place on Monday 6th September
- Students will start back in school from Tuesday 7th September

Year 9

- Initial Covid Testing will take place on Tuesday 7th September
- Students will start back in school from Wednesday 8th September

Each year group will then take part in a further round of in-school Covid testing over the next few days with students coming out of lesson to be tested before we move back to a pattern of home testing.

Please would you make a note of the start dates for your child(ren)'s year so you know when they should come into school for testing and when they will be starting in school for us.

I will write to you nearer the time to update you about the initial round of Covid testing and how you can book your child(ren) in for their tests.

Arrangements for next school year

We have been advised by the Department for Education that the current need to divide the school into 'bubbles' will not be required in September. Also many of the other restrictions will be lifted. This will allow us to run the school much more normally than we have for the past 16 months, including re-instating normal school uniform for all days of the week, as students will once again be able to make use of the changing rooms for PE.

School uniform

As stated above students should wear their full uniform to school each day from September and carry their PE kits with them on the days they have PE, (or any clubs), so they can change before and after each session.

We really want to start off the year with all students looking smart and tidy and correctly dressed in line with our school rules. Uniform is an important way in which students show their pride in the school and support the high expectations we have for each of them. To that end, and to reduce unnecessary confrontation right at the start of the year, please could I ask for your full support in this matter. I have attached a full copy of the uniform information and dress code at the back of the letter, but please can I draw your attention to the following points which we know are the ones that students occasionally struggle to stick to:

Trousers and Skirts

- Trousers - Plain black, full length, tailored school trousers (not jeans style or fashion style).
- Skirts - Plain loose fitting black knee-length pleated school skirt worn with black or natural tights.
- Stretchy / lycra 'body-con' type skirts are not acceptable and students must NOT wear them to school

Jewellery, Make-up and Hairstyles

- Jewellery is not permitted, except for one small stud earring in each lower ear lobe.

Hair styles

- Hair styles must be natural colours and business like. (Tramlines, streaks and other extreme hairstyles are not allowed.)

These are just a few key reminders. Please check the full uniform information for all the requirements (including details of the PE kit).

School Transport

Please note that with the lifting of many of the Covid restrictions, DCC Transport will stop providing the additional M14 and M16 buses that run to Tiverton and Cullompton. Students travelling by these routes will need to access the main Stagecoach public buses that drop-off and collect from the school each day. At present I can't confirm what the requirements will be around the wearing of face masks on school transport however I will let you have this information before the start of term.

Staff Changes

Finally I wanted to make you aware of a number of staff changes that are taking place as we come to the end of the year. These include the following members of the Learning Support Team who are leaving us: Jason Chapman, Lizzee Firth, Laura Jones and Carly Payne. From our catering team, Jill Goldhawk is retiring; and from our admin team Hannah Daniel is leaving. Fiona Lee from our HR team is leaving us; and Charlotte Skelding one of our Cover Supervisors is leaving to train as a teacher. Finally there are two other significant departures to tell you about. First Kevin Sercombe one of our PE staff who has been with us for over 14 years is moving onto pastures new; and secondly Liz Hawkins, who has been our SENDCo for 13 years is heading for a well-earned retirement. All will be sorely missed, both by their colleagues and by all the children they have worked so tirelessly to support.

It only remains to wish you all a great summer.

Yours sincerely



A R Blackburn (Mr)
Headteacher

School Uniform

Students at Uffculme are expected to present themselves smartly and appropriately at all times. Styles of clothing and hair should reflect the business-like and purposeful image for which we are known and of which we are proud.

All articles must be clearly marked with pupil's name.

Items that must only be purchased from Marks & Spencer (www.mandsyourschooluniform.com)

- Black blazer with school badge woven on the pocket.
- School tie.
- Plain black V-neck sweater with school logo on (optional).

Marks & Spencer or other supplier

- Plain white long or short sleeve blouse or shirt, which is long enough to tuck in and which buttons to the neck.
- Plain black, full length, tailored school trousers (not jeans style or fashion style).
- Plain loose-fitting black knee-length pleated school skirt worn with black or natural tights.
- Plain black school trousers (not jeans style or fashion style).
- Plain black V-neck sweater (optional).
- Plain black shoes with low heels suitable for school wear (not backless or open-toed styles).

School-approved styles of uniform items such as skirts and trousers can be found on the Uffculme School page of the Marks & Spencer website at www.mandsyourschooluniform.com.

Marks & Spencer are the only suppliers authorised to sell Uffculme School branded uniform.

Outdoor Clothing

- A waterproof coat is needed for some school activities, such as fieldwork, and for movement to the detached classrooms.
- Denim jackets and leather type jackets are not permitted.
- Hoodies, except the official Uffculme PE ones which may only be worn for PE, are not permitted.

Jewellery, Make-up and Hairstyles

- Jewellery is not permitted, except for one small stud earring in each lower ear lobe.
- Make-up may only be worn by pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 and must be discreet.
- Nail varnish is not allowed.
- Hair styles must be natural colours and business like: tramlines, streaks and other extreme hairstyles are not allowed.

The school reserves the right to make the final decision on what is and what is not acceptable.