

3 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As most of you will be aware from the media the Department for Education has now published its guidance to schools on its plans for students from September. The good news is that the plans now extend to all students and the intention is that every student, in every year group, should return to school after the summer break. We are really keen to make this happen as we know that whilst students (and their parents) have worked hard from home, it is no replacement for the face-to-face teaching we can offer in school. In addition to this we also recognise the immense importance to students' wellbeing, of them being amongst their peers and part of a vibrant community again with all the opportunities that it offers.

Thank you to all those parents of Year 10 that have encouraged and supported their children to come into school each week and have time with their teachers. This has been invaluable in helping us to start to build a picture of where they are in their learning so we can prepare for next year, and all that needs to be done to get them ready for their GCSEs. I would also like to thank parents from Years 7, 8 and 9 that are bringing their children into school for the afternoon Tutor Meetings. I know that in a handful of cases this has not been possible due to transport or other issues, but for all those that have come into school, their smiles tell the story of how much they have got out of just a brief visit with their tutor and some of their friends, and hopefully this will help them to look forward to September when they can return full time.

Obviously as the school re-starts there will have to be changes from our 'normal' way of operating. The coronavirus is still at large in the community and nowhere is immune to its effects, so as the school gets back into action there will have to be multiple layers of controls and measures in place to minimise the risks to students and staff as much as is possible. And whilst we will never be able to guarantee a completely risk-free environment (indeed no school, work place or institution can ever do this), I am sure that by the start of next term we will have all the appropriate systems in place so that you can send your children into school with a real sense of confidence.

The guidance that has been produced by the government is quite complex and wide-ranging and it will take us some time to unpack and work out how we can best implement it in a rural setting, on a site which is not a modern build, but rather one that has grown and evolved throughout the history of the school. There are some real challenges, but they are not insurmountable and I hope that over the coming weeks we will be able to share our plans with you, so you get a sense of what we are doing in preparation for the students.

The reason for writing today therefore, is not to provide detail of the plans, but rather to confirm that the school will be open to all children and to highlight one or two things in readiness for September. The first relates to attendance. Over the past few months, the government has rightly placed a lot of emphasis on parental choice – allowing parents to determine whether they wish their children to take up the opportunity of returning to school. From September it is clear that all students should be in school unless there are clear medical reasons relating to shielding.

The second thing to highlight is school uniform. Usually at this time of year many students' uniform would be wearing out and parents would be thinking about purchasing replacements for September. Whilst this year their uniform may be in better shape than usual, we all know that children grow, and it would be worth checking that it will still be appropriate for students to wear next term, a particular example would be girls' skirt length and style. Here is the [link to the school's uniform information](#) – please would you check it carefully as there have been some minor changes to the information for September and it is important that your child has the right clothing for next term. We really want to start the year in a positive way and if students are in the correct uniform, and hair, make-up and piercings are in line with school rules, this will help to avoid unwanted confrontations on the first few days back and ensure that students can quickly settle back into their studies.

At the moment we have no news about how school transport will operate under the new guidance, but hopefully we will hear more from the local authority over the coming days and be able to forward this information to you.

Finally, I know that some of you may be making plans for holidays abroad now some of the restrictions around foreign travel are easing. As you will be aware in some cases there are two-week quarantine periods for people returning back to the UK, and whilst I would hope that your plans won't prevent your child starting back at school with their peers, if you think there is a possibility of this occurring (as your return is within two weeks of the start of the term), please could I ask that you get in touch and discuss the matter with us.

I know that many of you may have questions that you would like answered, however I would ask for your patience whilst we work through all the planning. Once I am in a position to share more detail with you I will certainly get back in touch, and be assured that you will get details of all the arrangements for next term in plenty of time. However, this might not be before the end of this term given there are only two weeks left.

Yours sincerely,



A R Blackburn (Mr)
Headteacher