

24<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing, as promised, with details of the arrangements for the start of the new term. We are really looking forward to seeing all the students again and what we will hope will be a return to normality (more or less), and a year free from disruption. Please note that if you have a child starting in Year 7, there will be a separate letter coming to you about the start of term.

We have now received the latest government guidance for the September re-opening of schools and can confirm that as expected the protective measures that we have had to adhere to over the past 18 months have now been eased, allowing us to operate the school without the need for the enforced separation of students in artificial 'year group bubbles'. However, there will still be a need for us to exercise strong hygiene and other safety measures, and we will work with the whole school community to ensure that these are maintained as they should be.

The 'Joining Instructions' below set out the main information you need to know in readiness for September – please do share them with your children.

### **Start Dates (and initial Covid Testing)**

One of the most important measures is the need to screen all students for Covid as they return from the summer break. With Covid levels high across Devon, particularly amongst younger ages, you will understand how essential it is that we do all we can to ensure that we can start off the school year with a Covid-free environment if possible, and the best way of ensuring this is for students to be tested before they return to school, and then again immediately after their return. We have therefore staggered the return of students back to school to enable us to do this, (in much the same way that we did as they returned from the Lockdown in March last year).

As before, the first round of Covid testing will take place on an appointment basis. Parents will need to book a time slot to bring their child into school. Then after the test the student may return home. Confirmation of the result will be sent through later in the day. Assuming the test is negative, the student may then return to school on the start date for their year group.

**To book a test for your child please go online to [Covid Testing | Uffculme School](#)**

#### **Years 7 and 10**

- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September - initial Covid Testing will take place in school for the pupils in Year 7 and 10.
- Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September – students return to school (assuming their test result from the preceding Friday was negative.)

#### **Years 8 and 11**

- Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September - initial Covid Testing will take place in school for the pupils in Years 8 and 11.

- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September – students return to school (*assuming their test result from the preceding day was negative*).

### **Year 9**

- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September – initial Covid Testing will take place in school for the pupils in Year 9.
- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September – students return to school (*assuming their test result from the preceding day was negative*).

Once pupils have started back to school, they will take part in a further round of in-school Covid testing, with them coming out of lesson to be tested before we move to a pattern of home testing for the rest of the month (and possibly longer).

Please make a note of the dates that relate to your child(ren) and I would particularly ask that you support us by booking your child in for a Covid test with us so we can start off the school year in the strongest way possible.

We recognise that some parents may not be able to bring their child(ren) into school on their designated testing day and where this happens, we will arrange for them to be tested on the morning of their year group's return. However, we want to avoid this as far as possible, as students will not be able to re-join their classmates and start lessons until the testing is complete and the result confirmed.

At this point I must thank you all for your overwhelming support over the past 12 months with the testing programme, with over 99% of you agreeing for your children to take part – I'm sure this played a big part in securing a safe environment for all members of the school community.

All students should return to school on the day when their year group returns, and their attendance will start to be recorded from that point.

### **School Uniform**

With the easing of restrictions, we will be able to fully open the Sports Facilities, including the PE Changing Rooms, so that students can once again use them for changing into and out of PE kit for their lessons. Students should therefore wear their full uniform into school each day from September, carrying their PE kits with them on the days they have PE, (or any clubs), so they can get changed before and after each session. Note, as students won't know their timetable for their first day back in school, (and so won't know whether they have PE), they will NOT be expected to have their PE kit with them on their first day back.

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 as we start the term, please could I ask for your full support in this matter. I would remind all students that hair styles must be natural colours and business like, (tramlines, streaks and other extreme hairstyles are not allowed), and piercings are not permitted except for one small stud earring in each lower ear lobe.

### **School Transport**

The government guidance continues to recommend that students should wear face coverings when travelling on school and public transport. Please could I therefore request that all students when travelling to and from school by bus, make sure that they wear a mask when on board.

Please note that with the lifting of many of the Covid restrictions, DCC Transport will no longer be running the additional M14 and M16 buses that last year ran to Tiverton and Cullompton. Instead students travelling by these routes will need to access the main Stagecoach public buses that drop-off and collect from the school each day.

### **Catering Arrangements**

These will return to normal with a single break time and lunchtime for all students. However, for now we are asking that payment continues to be made by payment fob, rather than biometric thumbprint. Fobs should be topped up by ParentPay as in the past

### **What to do if you suspect that your child may have coronavirus**

If at any time you suspect that your child has coronavirus, please do not send them to school, but keep them home and seek a PCR Test as confirmation. If this happens, please notify the school office so that we are aware of the situation and can provide guidance and support as required.

We will be in contact with any further updates as needed. It just remains for me to say how much we are looking forward to seeing everyone in a couple of weeks' time.

Best wishes



**Alan Blackburn**  
**Headteacher**