

September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I would like to start by extending a warm welcome to all our new students and their families as well as those returning after the lengthy break that was forced upon us all. It is so good to have the students back with us and I am really proud of the way in which they have positively engaged with all of the protective measures that are in place. It is really clear just how much they want to be back in school and want to get back to their learning, and they recognise that for this to happen we all need the systems to work and they are certainly playing their part in ensuring this.

### Staff news

As well as over 200 new Year 7 students, we are also delighted to be able to welcome some new members of teaching staff. These are Mr Winsor who has taken on the leadership of the English Department; Mr Wigmore who has joined the RE Team; and Mr Baker who has joined the Science department. We also welcome Mr Atkinson to the History department and Mrs Sotomayor who will be teaching Food, Textiles and Design Technology.

Finally, I'm sure that you would wish to join me in sending our congratulations to Mrs Statton and to Mrs McGuigan who both gave birth to happy, healthy babies a few weeks ago.

### Attendance at school

Whilst we are really pleased to have students back with us, it is essential that this is done safely. As you will know from the news, the direction of travel with the coronavirus has not been positive in recent weeks and we need to do all we can to ensure that the school remains Covid free. To that end, it is essential that if a student shows ANY of the three symptoms below, they remain at home and a coronavirus test be sought for them:

- a continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell

The same applies to any family members that may have one or more of these symptoms. Whether it be a student or another family member that has the symptoms, ALL the members of the household MUST self-isolate until the person with the symptoms has been tested and receives a negative result.

In a small number of cases students have come into school with coronavirus symptoms and we have had to send them home (and their siblings) for the protection of all the other students. Fortunately, each case has so far proved to be negative, but obviously if a child should come to school with the virus it poses real risks to all of the other students in that year group 'bubble'. So, for that reason I am asking for your complete

support on this matter and that **you keep your children home if they or someone else in the home has symptoms.**

### **Lunchtime arrangements**

Of all the areas in the school, this has been the most challenging to sort out. Feeding 1050 students in an hour is never easy but it is even more difficult when each group of 200 students must be kept separate from all the others. However, here again the students have been brilliant as they have patiently waited for us to get things right for them, which we have hopefully done following some adjustments that are in place from today.

Please note that due to the circumstances we are operating in, the selection of food is more limited than usual, but each day there are still plenty of options including at least 3 hot choices for vegetarians and non-vegetarians, as well as vegan food and a selection of sandwiches and salads. An example of a typical weekly menu is available on the website at this [link](#). And although the choice is more limited there is still plenty available throughout the lunchtime as the team are continually cooking throughout the lunch hour to ensure that no year group misses out.

If students have any specific dietary requirements, then they can speak with Mandy Frankham, our Canteen Manager, first thing on a Monday morning when they arrive in school and she will be happy to help them.

### **Trips, Clubs and Activities**

A major part of Uffculme School is the opportunities that it affords to its students. Where it is safe to run a club or a school trip, we will do all we can to make it happen. I am really pleased therefore that many activities are already up and running for students to join in with. This includes sports clubs; performing arts; and adventurous activities. (Just this weekend we have had groups out mountain biking and canoeing.) We are also hoping to shortly get our walking programme going, starting with the Three Moors Challenge.

Unfortunately, there are two main types of activities that are not currently allowed, and these relate to residential trips and any overseas trips. It is therefore with great sadness that we have taken the decision to cancel the Year 11 Ski Trip as well as some others that were planned into the calendar. We are writing out to parents of those affected by these cancellations and arranging full refunds. Whilst it is a real shame that students will not be able to access these amazing opportunities that we had planned, the safety of students must come first at all times.

We are however, hoping to still be able to run our Year 7, 8 and 9 Activities Week at the end of the year and plans are already well under way to put this together for students. Obviously, much will depend upon the situation with the coronavirus and how that develops over the coming months, but I hope that in January we will be able to announce our plans and begin the process of students choosing their activities for that week in the summer.

Unfortunately, Year 10 Work Experience looks less hopeful at the moment and whilst we are still actively working with the organisations that assist us with this programme, we think that suitable placements will be

much harder to arrange this time around. We have not given up however, and will again confirm the situation with students and parents early in the New Year

## Key Dates

Whilst the restrictions on the number that can gather together is having an impact on the events that we had planned into the calendar for this term, we are trying hard to find creative ways around things so that much of what we want to do can still go ahead, albeit in a different format. Here are some of the main events that are planned in the calendar for this term with a brief note on our plans for them:

- Open Evening – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October  
This event, involving all of the staff and around 300 students, normally attracts 700-800 visitors to the school. Obviously, this cannot happen this year so instead we are planning a Live Stream event on that evening which will allow us to tell prospective parents more about Uffculme School and also provide an opportunity to showcase the school. This will be done through a series of pre-recorded video interviews with students and staff, as well as a longer film showing something of the typical student experience at Uffculme School.
- Staff Training Day – Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October  
On this day the school will be closed to all students so that staff can receive further training on remote learning. Whilst we have carefully considered postponing this training day until later in the year, the sad reality is that there may be a time over the coming months when we, along with all other schools, find some or all students having to work from home for a period of time, if the government decides to implement new protective measures, or the school were to have an outbreak of coronavirus. For all of these reasons we want to make sure that we are as prepared as possible to support our students at home and so lessen the impact of time out of school.
- Post 16 Evening – Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October  
This is usually an after-school event that parents can attend with their children to explore the Post-16 opportunities that are available. This year due to the various restrictions we will run it as an in-school event for students only. In this way they can still meet with all the college and sixth form providers and obtain the information they need, and then if parents wish to follow up on the information they can do so through the providers' own open events.
- Year 8 Parents' Evenings – B Population on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November, and R Population on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November  
These events will be run entirely as remote events with parents able to book appointments and then meet with teaching staff online. Full information about the booking system and how to join in on the evening will be sent home over the coming weeks.

- Tutor/Parents Meetings – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December

As these are one-to-one meetings with tutors, at present we are hoping they will still be able to go ahead as face-to-face meetings, but we will have to keep this under close review as we approach the date.

If you have any questions about these or other events in the calendar, or if there are any issues with how your child has started the term or anything else you would like us to know, please get in touch with his/her Form Tutor or Head of Year.

Thank you once again for helping us to achieve the best for your child. Despite all that has happened over the recent months, with the determination and commitment of staff, students and their families, the school is in a really strong position and we are looking forward to seeing all the students' achievements over the coming months.

Yours sincerely



**Alan Blackburn**  
**Headteacher**