



Thursday 27 August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this final week is going to plan - whether that is catching a few final days together as a family or simply getting everything ready for next week. You may recall that I wrote to you last week and committed to setting out more information on how we seek to address those risks associated with the full reopening of our school. Page two of this letter provides an introduction to that risk assessment, but I wish to begin by drawing your attention once more to [the guidance booklet](#) for families that I issued last week.

Back to School Guidance Booklet

If you have a look at [our website](#), you will now see a prominent link to [documents that relate to the reopening of our school](#). The guidance booklet is now there and should, therefore, be easily accessed by families throughout this next phase.

If you look at the booklet again, you will see that there is already a second version. As new guidance arrives, or as we learn from our experiences, we shall make some changes but I shall always let you know of those changes in my letters to you. The slightly updated version (attached and on the website) provides clearer information on the equipment each student needs to have in their bag each day (page 6), the wearing of PE kits to school (page 9), and wearing face coverings on school buses and public transport (page 6). The overnight development on the wearing of face coverings in schools is now addressed at the bottom of page 5 - although that announcement does not have a major effect on our safety plans for next week because of the way we have zoned the school for your children throughout the entire day.

I would dearly love to be able to issue you with a [guidance booklet](#) that is set in stone and will not change at all over time but this is not possible. It will be difficult but we shall all have to get used to national or local guidance shifting over time and having to adapt very quickly to this without too much fuss.

Back to School Risk Assessment

Our website now provides families with a user-friendly version of our risk assessment. We hope it is easy to navigate. We know the previous incarnations of this type of risk assessment were positively received because they allow you to look at as much or as little as you choose. You are also able to explore the risk assessment by specific themes or key words, for example.

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The risk assessment has been carefully put together and is based on all of the information schools have been asked to consider. The risk assessment has been formally approved by the Governing Body and is subject to very regular review.

Much like the guidance booklet for families, the risk assessment will almost certainly undergo updates as we learn more about how the school will operate or solve problems we had not even considered. Please be reassured that weekly meetings take place that monitor the risk assessment, listen to feedback and make all necessary adjustments. In my regular letter to families, I shall point to any changes that we have made as well. As I have said before, we shall learn as we go and please get in touch with any observations, ideas or concerns.

It is hard to anticipate all of your burning questions but the following have been asked more than once in recent days and may suggest a wider interest in the answers:

Do all students have to return to school or can they continue home learning if they wish?

All students across the United Kingdom are expected to return to school as normal. This does not mean that we or any other school should be insensitive to the fears that may exist or crudely ignore the particular circumstances in each family. If a parent or carer has a concern about the return of any of their children, they should make an urgent appointment to meet with the relevant Head of Year. We hope that by looking in greater depth at the mitigations in place to reduce risk, families can be reassured but additional measures could be considered to facilitate the return.

Will children get to mix with their friends or will they have to stay with one class all week?

Whilst it is true that students will not be mixing with students from other year groups, they will be mixing with other students in their own year group. Your children do not have all of their lessons with the same students. This means that your children will be with different students for different lessons in different seats each period. It is true they will be in the same eight or so classrooms but they will not be sat on the same chair, sat next to the same person, in the same room, for weeks on end!

Will children get into trouble if they do not have the correct uniform or PE kit on day one?

The short answer is 'no', as long as parents and carers write to or email the tutor with some details so that we know there is a legitimate problem. However, if a student turns up to school without the correct uniform or equipment then we have a problem that needs to be addressed right away to maintain high standards.

Do children have to wear school branded tracksuits on those days they have PE lessons?

No, we would never ask families to spend money needlessly in this way – particularly at this time! Our main worry is that PE lessons will be frustratingly shortened if we do not find a way to minimise the time it will take to facilitate changing of students. This might be one of those topics where our advice shifts over time as the PE Department work out what works and what does not. More on this when we see your children on day one.

Will the rear gate to the school be locked permanently?

No. It will certainly be locked during week one and we ask that everyone bears with us as we work out the risks associated if hundreds of students were able to arrive and depart by this fairly narrow thoroughfare. Watch this space and apologies for the inconvenience caused in the meantime.

Will there be any school events with parents and carers this year?

Not at first, but we expect so later this year. The 'KS5 Explained Evening' (Thursday 3 September) will certainly be an online event and it is best to assume that all of the 'Meet the Tutor' meetings (Years 7 to 13 throughout w/b 12 October) will be via Google Meets or telephone. Fingers crossed,

by the time we have the first Parent and Teacher Consultation (PTC) on Thursday 3 December for the Year 12s, we shall be back to face-to-face meetings on the school site.

Will the school close or the entire year group go home if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19?

Please take a look at the risk assessment for the full answer to this question. The simple answer is 'no' and that we must not assume that when a case of COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed that students are sent home. In short, if and when this happens in any school in England, each will be required to make urgent contact with their local Public Health England team and follow a process that is set out in [this publically available flow chart](#). As you will see, each case is risk assessed separately and each decision informed by those best placed to make the right call.

And finally...

Unless there is anything significant to inform you of in the coming days, I shall write to you again next Tuesday 1 September. I wish you luck with your own reestablishment of normal bedtime and getting up routines! I also wish to reassure you and your children that a few nerves will be whistling around every home next Tuesday or Wednesday night, but we shall do our very best to make them all feel welcome and safe when we see them on Wednesday (Year 7s) or Thursday (all other year groups).

Please remember that you will be without them for an extra ten minutes each day because school now finishes at 3:15pm and not 3:05pm.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Doherty', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Doherty

Headteacher