

9 July 2020

Dear Families,

I hope this letter finds you and your families all safe, well and looking forward to a well-deserved break over the Summer period.

On Thursday last week, the Department for Education published further guidance for schools, outlining its plans for September. The Government expects that all children and young people will return to full-time education in the new academic year and requires schools to put in place measures, a 'system of controls', to enable this to happen.

System of controls overview:

Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently-touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
5. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
6. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
7. Numbers 1-4 must be in place in schools at all times.

Response to any infection

8. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
9. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community
10. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice
11. Numbers 7-9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

As you can imagine, in order to ensure that we are able to fully meet these expectations there needs to be a significant re-think around some of our practises both within the school and for our young people and families. One way of viewing the new guidance is to imagine that we are being asked to deliver "education as usual" with additional precautions to make this as safe as is practicable.

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We will write again next week with an updated families guidance document that will take you through all of the measures we have taken and how we will be operating come September. As ever, it is crucial that we work together and your support in working through this with your child(ren) before returning in September will be a huge help to us all in keeping our community safe.

There will also need to be adjustments to the way we run assemblies, how we move between lessons, break time routines and travel to and from school. We will be looking to minimise the interaction between year groups as much as possible, as one of the overriding measures that we can take to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus is to establish new year group-size bubbles of students where practical. As we have done throughout this period, we will continue to communicate to you our risk assessment, plans and procedures in the firm desire to provide the best education for your child(ren).

One of the more challenging aspects of the guidance is that all teachers and other staff will operate across different bubbles. This is clearly necessary to enable schools, particularly secondary schools, to provide anything like a normal timetable – but it's obviously likely to cause concern to some staff. As you can imagine, we will be working with our staff, especially those who fall into more vulnerable categories, to provide additional protection and support. In addition, I appreciate that you will inevitably have questions that relate to your own personal circumstances, including specific worries about health risks. During our planning period (over the next week), I ask that you hold your questions until we have finalised and published our approach, including our risk assessment. At this point, questions and enquiries will be welcomed. I am keen to work with you to ensure that you are confident about the measures we have taken, and individual concerns allayed as much as possible.

The following extract from the guidance provides advice regarding those who have been shielding or self-isolating: "We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore, they may be temporarily absent.
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people."

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Attendance

One final point at this time is to direct your attention to the Government advice around overseas travel. I am sure that many of you will be wanting to take advantage of the Summer break and go abroad or may even already have plans. However, there is an expectation that all students are back in school full time from 2 or 3 September, as explained above. Therefore we ask that any plans you do make take into account any Government guidance and that 14 day isolation periods are accounted for to ensure students are able to attend school on their first day. [Click here for the guidance.](#)

You may also find the following guidance specifically aimed at parents and carers useful:

[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term](#)

Important Travel Survey

In order for us to finalise our plans around arrival and departure times at school, it would be extremely beneficial to us if we know how your child intends to travel to school. Many of you, I know, will be happy to revert back to your usual mode of transport, others may be able to take advantage of guidance encouraging walking or cycling where possible. Equally, some of you may wish to make adjustments in light of COVID-19 or perhaps just in response to the planned Link Road widening work in September. As a result of these uncertainties and a possible change in travel, we would kindly request that all families complete this short survey by 9am on Monday 13 July. This goes for all families including those of Year 10 and Year 12 students for whom we have previously gathered this information for the Summer term. [Click here for the Travel survey](#)

I will leave you with some powerful words in a quote from author Marianne Williamson:

“In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it”.

I recognise that this continues to be a stressful and worrying time for many families but I am confident that through good communication and working together, we can successfully welcome all students back and support them on the next stage of their learning journey.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Meloni
Headteacher

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