



11 September 2020
BLW/Manage/SIMSIN/lca

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you at the end of our first full week back both to thank you for the overwhelming support for our return to on site education and to update you on any on-going issues or adjustments.

There is a great deal to celebrate about the students returning to College. Not least their immediate refocus to learning and their positive attitude to lessons.

Teachers have reported a fantastic approach to lessons as students have clearly a strong desire to settle to work and an ambition to do well. Our routine leadership walks around the College have seen the familiar sights and sounds of purposeful, focused learning. It has been a joy. Student conduct around College has also been exceptional as they have had to adjust to new one-way systems and recommended mask wearing at different times, they have largely shown pragmatism, understanding and respect as they have learnt a new way of moving and working.

Students are benefitting from being able to learn from their teachers in person, which obviously requires them to be in College. Attendance has been very strong, averaging over 98% on most days this week. This will be important to maintain going forward as we may face the reality of individual cases or bubbles self-isolating if rates rise in the locality going into the autumn. However, we are well equipped to be able to manage normal winter colds and families should be prepared to support students to manage this respectfully with sanitising and mask wearing whilst still attending College as much as possible.

In support of students getting back to learning, it will be useful to remind ourselves of the use of Firefly. Mr Howard, Deputy Headteacher will send out letters to each year group next week to remind or inform of how to log on and use as a parent. Year 7 should not need to be using it this week. Good practise is that you sit down with your child each week and check what deadlines they have and how they are managing their work. Now they are back in school, learning will not just happen between the hours of 8.40am and 3.05pm; their independent learning skills will be an important part of their success.

The work in opening the College has been considerable and I am appreciative of the herculean efforts of teachers, support staff and parents in enabling it to have gone this well. It has not been helped by the continuing updates to DfE guidance and ESCC risk assessments and protocols this week. We are updating the Covid Arrangements page of our website accordingly, which can be found under the Information tab. We review daily and adjust our practice in the light of experience and the reality of 1500 students and 130 staff on site. Whilst we are delighted with how well things have gone, equally we continue to work to improve and fine tune where needed.



Buses:

We are aware there were some issues of capacity early this week and subsequently students needed reminding of the need to wear masks for the entire duration of the journey. We are in daily contact with ESCC Transport regarding additional services, some of which we secured after the first day and we are working hard to instil habits of mask wearing, when mandatory on buses, with students when we see them in school and when leaving the site. We would appreciate parental support in reinforcing this message at home and in the mornings.

We would also appreciate parental support for considerate and legal parking when picking up. It is important not to park in the bus bay as this is needed for buses and with the increase in buses to create capacity, this is essential. It is also important as previously stated, not to park on the zigzags for the safety of students or across resident's driveways.

Masks:

We are aware that nationally there are polarising views on this issue and some will disagree with our stance, however we have broadly taken the government line and recommended the wearing of masks when students are in corridors or indoor communal spaces. We are overtly reminding students about this in lessons and on re-entering the building from social time. However, we are aware there will be exemptions and it is not currently mandatory. Until government guidance changes that is also the College position. Please discuss with your child at home and reinforce that if you equip them with a mask, it is important they use it as recommended.

Canteen:

We have worked with the canteen to provide the pre-ordered lunches and will continue to do so next week. Until Monday morning at 9.00am you will be able to add an order for next week using this form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdr4AKkThAwIsT9woiC2kVkhZUfYnMJP8zSZh0ITtYvTYhSgw/viewform?usp=sf_link. If you are pre-ordering for next week you must make sure there are sufficient funds on your child's account to allow us to deduct the correct amount.

We are aiming in the following week to open up a greater service to the canteen and return to cashless catering in a variety of locations, with the Covid protections from before Lockdown in place plus some additional distancing measures to ensure we maintain bubbles. Once we have confirmed this is possible we will alert you so you have a chance to top up your child's account as required.

I would reiterate how wonderful it has been to see and speak to students this week. Both staff and students are clearly delighted to be back in each other's company. We will be monitoring well-being carefully and ensuring that everyone is adjusting as well as possible to a return to different routines and systems. Please continue to let your relevant pastoral staff know if you have any concerns. The initial evidence is that students have adjusted extremely well to being back, they are thriving on the learning environment and are keen to make as much progress as possible.

Thank you for your support which has clearly prepared the students well for their return, this is not unnoticed and is very much appreciated.

Best wishes



MS C BARLOW
Head Teacher