



10 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We approach the end of term in what has been a challenging and thought-provoking year. I know parents and students will have many questions about what September might look like. As you will be aware, the lengthy guidance was only issued at the end of last week but we have been working full-time to interpret it to our context. I will share with you here an outline of our initial thinking but must stress this is subject to ongoing review and consultation. Therefore, it does not attempt to give fine detail, nor should it be taken as a final plan; I will provide further detail in due course and Heads of Year will follow up for each year group before the end of term but things may change again over the summer. It will be important to “stay alert” for further updates in late August.

Start to Term

I can give confirmation, at this stage, of the dates for the start to term. After much deliberation, we have decided that the best option is to start all students as quickly as we can after their long absence from the school site. Whilst this will need to be carefully managed we know that the vast majority want to get back and get on with their learning. However, we are also aware that Year 7 and Year 12 will be starting for the first time and will not have had their transition days or events on site and so there needs to be differentiation in our management of these year groups. Therefore, the start to term will be as follows:

3rd September: INSET Day (as advised by ESCC)

4th September: Year 7 and Year 12

7th September: All year groups

Broad approaches to College to ‘minimise contact’

We have deliberated over a range of options available to schools including staggered start and finish times, split break and lunches, static classrooms, changing the school day, length of lessons etc. Many of these are highly problematic in our context and raise more problems than they solve. The government guidance requires us to **minimise contact where possible**, not remove it. Every school will manage this differently according to their circumstances and setting, comparisons are not helpful or useful. The focus is on *what is sensible in our setting*. Our planning is subject to ongoing consultation with different groups: staff, unions, governors, parents and students. The information below is the current provisional planning.

Essentially, we aim to be open for all year groups in the normal times of the school day and to follow a normal timetable of lessons in normal classrooms. Students will travel to school on mixed year group buses and therefore we can only try to reduce contact whilst they are on school site. We are not planning any staggering of the school day or lessons split with staggered breaks or lunches. Uniform will be as normal and the standard College expectations will apply.



However, there will be a strict one-way system in operation around College. Inside College will be available for lesson time only; before school and during social time, students must expect to be outside so a coat will be important. Year groups will have zoned spaces to minimise crossover of year groups which they must keep to. We will aim for lunches to be available but this offer will be limited and pre-booked in advance. The lunch will be taken to the social spaces as we cannot reduce contact in the Dining Hall; packed lunches may be a preferred option for many.

Students must have the correct equipment of their own as sharing will not be permissible; all resources will be subject to a tracked routine of cleaning. Classrooms and general areas will be regularly cleaned and there will be a hand sanitising station in all classrooms which must be used as directed. By enabling teachers to stay in their classroom, we increase the ownership of the space and the ability to track and monitor its cleanliness throughout the day. We will allow face coverings to be worn if it is preferred but they must be managed responsibly.

There are still many details to resolve. Final details will evolve and will be communicated towards the end of August.

Well-being

Our culture and ethos are very important to us. Year group assemblies will be permissible but House assemblies will need to be done differently. An awareness of well-being and an understanding that all of us will carry different experiences and varying sensitivities from lockdown back into College will be important. We will be increasing our already considerable work with staff, students and also with parents around the language and structures we will be using for supporting emotional understanding and well-being.

Use of technology

As we re-open, we will diagnostically assess any gaps in learning and plan “catch up” in the methods I outlined last week. We should also be prepared for pockets of enforced remote learning, isolation or local lockdowns through the autumn. In this scenario, the methods we have deployed until now will stand us in good stead. Learning which is explained via recorded instructions, video and audio explanations followed up by tasks which consolidate knowledge will be flexible and adaptable to a variety of scenarios. We cannot and will not assume everyone has the same access and experience. Staff continue to build their banks of resources in this way and will continue learning how to work in different ways with a wide variety of access to equipment.

We will explore alternative technological methods of doing the things we cannot do in normal ways due to the restrictions. This may need to extend to events involving parents and wider community.

I am aware that this broad outline may produce more questions than answers, however I would ask for patience. Preparing for these circumstances involves considerable on-going risk assessment and consideration of many different perspectives and priorities. This is not aided by the fact that often we are not provided with answers to the questions ourselves or that information is at times contradictory. Please understand, we do not claim to be perfect but we will always prioritise the health and well-being of our students and plan to do our very best for them at all times.

Next week, we hope to share our plans for celebrating what has been a most exceptional year in many ways.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher