

Dear Parent/Carer

It has been an interesting and challenging 12 months we have just been through. At the time of writing all of our Year 10 bubble has been closed and there are students isolating across other year groups. We also have quite a number of staff isolating too, but the end of the school year is in sight.

It's hard to believe that we are at the end of another school year. Your child will be moving up a year group yet again. Maybe this year is their GCSE year, or they will be making their GCSE options. Whatever it is, it will seem like yesterday that you were dropping them off at Reception Class for the first time!

So – here are your key updates

What will September look like?

I think that it is safe to say that plans need to be ready to change dependent upon what happens with hospital admissions, infection rates and the possibility of new variants resistant to vaccines over the next two months. However, our plans are to return school back to a situation that is as normal as possible.

From September:

- Students will no longer remain in **bubbles** in set areas of the school.
- They will move around the school according to their timetables.
- We will have a flow system in place which aims to reduce crowding and congestion which students will be told about when they return.
- We have not yet made a decision about **face coverings** and whether they will be needed. We will need to respond to the conditions at the time as well as guidance issued from the DfE and professional bodies.
- From 16th August students will **NOT** have to **isolate** if they are close contacts of a confirmed case, but will be given additional LFT kits to conduct daily tests.
- Your child must **NOT** come to school in their **PE kit**. Changing rooms will be in use. We will change this if infection rates or circumstances change.
- Your child **MUST** have their own **hand sanitiser**. This remains an essential part of their school equipment.

Testing Prior to Return to School – the return of our *Test and Go* Centre

The Government require secondary schools to conduct tests on all students before they return in September:

As your child will potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school pupils and college students should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. (DfE, July 2021)

The first test must be negative before your child can attend school. The second test will be conducted during the school day when students have started back.

It is our understanding that the tests no longer need to include a swab of the back of the throat, but both nostrils may be used. Further guidance is due to be issued to schools on this.

The first day back at school for all students will be **Friday 3rd September**.

Your child will have a slot for their *Test and Go Appointment*.

Remember, if your child is Year 7 now, they will be Year 8 in the table below! Your child's tutor group will be different in the new school year as it increases by an increment of 2

i.e CL2 → CL4 / WN8 → WN10

Your child can come at any point during their tutor group's time slot, although no later than 5 minutes before the end.

Date of Test	Year Group	Tutor Group	Time of Test
Tuesday 31 st August	11	CL9 / CL10/CU9	9.00 – 10.00
		CU10/FN9/FN10	10.00 – 11.00
		WN9 / WN10	11.00 – 12.00
Wednesday 1 st Sept	9	CU5 / CU6	8.45 – 9.15
		CL5 / CL6	9.25 – 9.55
		FN5 / FN6	10.10 – 10.40
		WN5 / WN6	11.00 – 11.30
	10	CL7 / CL8	11.40 – 12.10
		CU7 / CU8	12.30 – 1.00
		FN7 / FN8	1.10 – 1.40
Thursday 2 nd Sept	7	WN7 / WN8	1.50 – 2.20
		CL1 / CL2	8.45 – 9.15
		CU1 / CU2	9.25 – 9.55
		FN1 / FN2	10.10 – 10.40
	8	WN1 / WN2	11.00 – 11.30
		CL3 / CL4	11.40 – 12.10
		CU3 / CU4	12.30 – 1.00
		FN3 / FN4	1.10 – 1.40
		WN3 / WN4	1.50 – 2.20

And so, in other news...

National Success for Balshaw's translators

Congratulations to our winners of the Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators run by Queens College Oxford. Not only did Emilia Monk, Isabel Pearson, Lucy Williamson, Matilda Stansfield and Gabriella Turner get winners or highly commended in the North West category against schools such as Manchester Grammar School, Merchant Taylors and Altrincham Girls' Grammar School, but they also won the National Competition!

Spanish Level 1 - Isabel Pearson Y7

French Level 2 - Lucy Williamson Y8

French Level 3 - Matilda Stansfield and Gabriella Turner Y10

This is an amazing achievement against some of the best language scholars in the country.

<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/anthea-bell-prize-winners-2021>

Retirements and departures:

At the end of this school year we are saying goodbye to three colleagues who are retiring:

- Mr Melling (Assistant Headteacher and D&T)

- Mr McFarlane (Head of Art)
- Ms Filler (RE, History)

All three of these colleagues have made a huge difference to the lives of the young people that they have worked with and are each highly experienced teachers who will be greatly missed.

Other staff are moving on to new roles:

- Mr Simpson (Science) is becoming Director of Science at Sharples High School in Bolton
- Mrs Wright (MFL) has a permanent role at Moor Park High in Preston
- Mrs Akhtar (D&T) will be moving to a new role.
- Mrs Bowman (RE) will become a Humanities Lead at a Special School in Liverpool

We are excited to welcome our new staff in September who have already been working closely with us since their appointments.

Staying safe over summer

We don't know what will happen over the summer, but one thing that we can be certain of is that children will use social media. Most of the time this contact is helpful and the way that young people keep in touch, but it can also be very negative and creates anxiety in young people around fear of what people might be saying, what they have said, what they may have missed etc.

In school we continue to educate about the appropriate use of social media and our mantra that if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. However, we have no control over what young people do in the care of their parents and six weeks is a long time! Please manage your child's online engagement and if it is not healthy for them, limit or remove this access.

We have just done some work this week with Year 8 about knife crime and sadly it was very timely as we have heard news this week about a former student who has been the victim of a knife attack. The speaker also talked about toxic friendship groups. He described friends who say that they 'have your back' and keep their mouths shut when asked about trouble. However, these same 'friends' won't say anything against the perpetrators when you are the victim. If there's trouble they will more likely just their phone out and film for their entertainment.

It is very difficult for young people to negotiate this sort of relationship which swings between being best friends one minute, perception of their friend being a bully the next and then back again to unbreakable 'friendship'. To make it even more challenging, often this all takes place in the virtual world!

High Standards

When we return after summer, the standards that you expect of Balshaw's will not have changed, so please ensure that your child does not return with false tan, dyed hair, fresh piercings (they will have to be removed) or any other extreme hairstyle. I give the same message each summer, but there are always one or two students and parents who act with surprise when it is pointed out that their tramline or two-inch talons are not part of our uniform!

And finally...

Enjoy your summer, have fun, stay safe and let's keep praying that we don't get new variants and that the men and women who work so hard in our NHS are not overwhelmed by people requiring care and increased levels of ill health as we enter the Autumn. I will send you a reminder in August of some of this information.

Your faithfully,

Mr Steven Haycocks

HEADTEACHER
BALSHAW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)