



Dear Parents & Carers,

I wrote to you last July with a sense of trepidation about the year ahead. In retrospect, whilst there have been a number of difficulties, I am very proud of how our school community has coped from September 2020 onwards. Students have been mature and supportive of others, and staff have adapted to each new challenge. In August 2019, our students achieved the school's best set of A level results and we achieved our second consecutive year of very positive GCSE results, in terms of both attainment and progress. Our students did exceptionally well in August 2020, but that achievement was clouded initially by mutant algorithms and political U-turns. It would be deeply unfair if there were any equivalent last-minute changes by the Department of Education this summer; we are proud of the way that GCSE and A level students applied themselves during the period of internal assessments. In a similar way, we hope that the plans outlined by the Government regarding September are implemented, as a return to normality is in the interests of all students. However, we will monitor the situation carefully and update all members of our community if guidance changes over the summer. This letter has been sent to all students and families who are part of our community and I would like to welcome Year 6 families, and thank leaving Year 11 and 13 families for their support of the school this year.

This year has seen protective bubbles and a completely different use of the building, with classes being taught in the main hall, library and activity studio. The school has become an arm of the national public health effort, with the need to trace close contacts, with particular pressure over the Christmas period and as we prepare for the summer break. We taught all students remotely from 4th January, established a very busy key worker school during the national lockdown, and provided laptops, food and other resources for families in need. We have developed new methods of engaging with students online, and have met many of you via virtual parents' evenings. We have also set up a testing centre on site and have regularly supplied students with lateral flow tests to use at home. As referenced above, our teachers have also created an internal exam board from scratch and have helped students with university and 6th form applications. Whilst doing those things, we have also maintained as much of our extracurricular opportunities as possible. In simple terms, we have tried our hardest with every new challenge and have learned and adapted quickly when entering unknown territory.

I would like to offer the following update in relation to September 2021. **Please be aware that Department for Education guidance might change significantly in August 2021.**

Department for Education & Public Health Guidance for September 2021

We hope that the next academic year will be characterised by a more 'normal' school experience for our students, with greater movement around the school, access to all classrooms and fewer protocols regarding how the school needs to function for purely public health reasons. However, we are not naive and are aware from experience that things can and do change very quickly. Based upon our understanding of the Department for Education's current guidance, the following changes will be made after 19th July 2021 in accordance with the Government's move to Step 4:

1. The risk of serious illness from coronavirus transmission still needs to be managed within schools.
2. Schools will still require a current risk assessment and proportionate control measures.
3. Bubbles will no longer be required.
4. Schools will no longer undertake contact tracing. From 16th August those aged under 18yrs will no longer be required to self-isolate when they are identified as a contact of a case.

5. Face coverings will no longer be recommended in school or on home-to-school transport.
6. Schools will be required to have an outbreak management plan to support the operation of the school during an outbreak in school or in the local area. (An outbreak can be classed as two or more positive cases in a school).
 - a. Some measures which may be advised on a temporary basis in an outbreak situation could include:
 - i. Reintroduction of bubbles
 - ii. Reintroduction of face coverings
 - iii. Enhanced testing
 - iv. Enhanced cleaning
 - v. School support for contact tracing
7. Asymptomatic lateral flow device (LFD) testing will remain in place twice weekly for secondary school age pupils and staff in all schools until the end of September. Schools are asked to establish test centres and for all students to complete two tests before their full return to school.

We will write to all parents and carers in the final week of the summer break to share any changes to the above guidance. The Department for Education's current guidance can be found here:

- [Evidence summary: COVID-19 – children, young people and education settings](#)
- [COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021: roadmap reviews](#)
- [SPI-M-O: Summary of further modelling of easing restrictions – roadmap Step 4, 9 June 2021](#)

There have been a number of staffing changes for September 2021 that we would also like to share with you:

Staffing for September 2021

We have a very experienced teaching staff at Durham Johnston and our teachers tend to dedicate their careers to the school. They are currently planning very carefully to ensure that students and their families have a clear sense of the subject content, assessment and extension work that they will prioritise in September. We are also saying goodbye to two very experienced staff members in Mr Martindale (Business & Computing) and Mr Scott (Physics). Both have been very popular, loyal members of staff, contributing to the success of large numbers of students at GCSE and A level. Mr Martindale joined the school in 2002 and Mr Scott has served his entire teaching career at the school, starting as an NQT in 1983. We wish both of them a happy and productive retirement from their teaching careers.

There have been a number of changes in terms of staffing for September 2021, with serving staff taking on additional roles and new appointments, with a number of teachers joining us for the new academic year. Those appointments are:

In School Changes

- **Mrs Bell** – Appointed to Deputy Headteacher from Assistant Headteacher.
- **Mr Wright** – Appointed to Deputy Headteacher from Assistant Headteacher.
- **Mrs Lennon** – Confirmed as Assistant Headteacher & Head of 6th Form.
- **Dr Coleman** – Appointed to a new role with responsibility for The Early Careers Framework, Initial Teacher Training & School to School Support.
- **Mr Horn** – appointed to Acting Subject Leader for Science from 2nd in Department.

New Staff Joining Durham Johnston

- **Mrs Abbs** – Joining the school in Design & Technology
- **Mr Batey** – Joining the school in Science (Physics).
- **Ms Davies** – Joining the school. Appointed as the school's new Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and teacher of English.
- **Mr Proudfoot** – Joining the school in Maths.
- **Miss Sparrow** – Joining the school in Art.
- **Mrs Walker** – Joining the school in Science.
- **Mrs Ward** – Joining the school in Business & Computing.

We have some additional plans in place for the summer break and some important improvements to the school building. The school will be open throughout the summer but access will be limited based upon the inaccessibility of reception and the atrium area of the building.

Summer Dates & information

- **Building Work** - The atrium is the central part of the school, running from reception to the English corridor. As of the afternoon of Friday 16th July the entire floor is scheduled to be replaced, so that it is accessible for all students and staff from 1st September 2021.
- **A Level & GCSE Results Days** - There are two results days in August. A level results day is Tuesday 10th August and GCSE results are shared on Thursday 12th August. A detailed letter outlining the results process has been sent to all Year 11 and Year 13 students and their families. You can also find them at the following links: [A Level Results](#); [GCSE results \(Students from DJCS\)](#); [GCSE results \(students from other centres\)](#).
- We will continue to provide a significant level of support for our current Year 11 and 13 students as they prepare for their next steps to 6th form study, university, work or an apprenticeship. Mrs Lennon has written to all Y13 students to explain how we will support them as part of the **A Level results' day on Tuesday 10th August**, which you can read at the link above.
- We are also very keen to offer support to all of our Year 11 students. Students will receive their **GCSE results on Thursday 12th August** and we will provide help and support to ensure that all of our students are clear about their next steps. **Please check the school website on Friday 6th August, as we will provide additional information about our results days and any changes that are necessary to the plans that have already been shared.**
- **Year 6 into 7 Summer School** - Our Year 6 summer school is scheduled for the weeks beginning 16th and 23rd August 2021. More information about the summer school can be found here: [Summer School](#)
- **Start of Term Dates** - Please also note that the school term starts for new Year 7 and for Year 12 students joining from other schools on **Friday 3rd September** and for all other year groups on **Monday 6th September**, including Year 12 students who have previously studied at Durham Johnston in Year 11.

The Year Ahead for each individual year group, September 2021-July 2022.

It is very important that parents, carers and students have a sense of the year ahead. The following offers an overview of some of the key dates in 2021-22 for each year group and our Year Leaders have provided individual messages for Years 7-11 [here](#). Mrs Lennon writes to Years 12 and 13 on a weekly basis and will continue to do so from September onwards.

Year 7 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

In September Year 7 will learn to mix with others in a much larger school and will quickly familiarise themselves with our routines and the building. Their induction will take place on the first day of the new school term and we will offer continued support as they become familiar with their new school. We will work closely with students to identify any extra support that is needed in terms of KS2 knowledge and will accelerate their understanding of key concepts and the skills necessary in their first year of secondary school.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Friday 3rd September 2021.
- **Year 7 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 18th October 2021.
- **Year 7 Settling in Report** – Week beginning 18th October 2021.
- **Year 7 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 13th June 2022.
- **Year 7 Report issued** – Week beginning 11th July 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

Year 8 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

Year 8 will be offered extra support by their teachers and we will make sure that the curriculum is tailored to their needs. We will also offer pastoral support so that students can feel fully part of the school after a very unusual first year where they have been limited to a very small bubble within the school and haven't had the opportunity to access the school's full range of facilities.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Monday 6th September 2021.
- **Year 8 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 13th September 2021.
- **Year 8 Report** – Week beginning 10th January 2022.
- **Year 8 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 9th May 2022.
- **Year 8 Report issued** – Week beginning 11th July 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

Year 9 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

We will also offer support to our Year 9 students and will provide additional time and guidance before they choose their GCSE options. Students will have support regarding pathways and careers and will have taster sessions in the GCSE subjects that they have not had the chance to study at KS3.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Monday 6th September 2021.
- **Year 9 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 13th September 2021.
- **Year 9 Report** – Week beginning 10th January 2022.
- **Year 9 Options Evening** – Monday 17th January 2022.
- **Year 9 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 31st January 2022.
- **Year 9 Report issued** – Week beginning 11th July 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

Year 10 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

We will make sure that Year 10 have a positive start to their GCSE subjects and will provide opportunities for any skills or key knowledge from Year 9 to be integrated effectively into their 2-year GCSE courses. Students have already started to study for their Science and RE qualifications and students have received detailed information from Mrs McFadden.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Monday 6th September 2021.
- **Year 10 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 18th October 2021.
- **Year 10 Report** – Week beginning 18th October 2021.
- **Year 10 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 7th March 2022.
- **Year 10 Mock Examinations** – Week beginning 20th June 2022.
- **Year 10 Report issued** – Week beginning 11th July 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

Year 11 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

We will work very closely with Year 11 students to identify any extra support that is needed and will plan the curriculum very carefully so that time in school is maximised. We will regularly assess their knowledge, understanding and exam skills to make sure that we cover the GCSE specification as efficiently as possible. All examinations will be completed formally in school to replicate their finals in the summer term.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Monday 6th September 2021.
- **Year 11 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 27th September 2021.
- **Year 11 Mock Examinations** - Week beginning 11th October 2021.
- **Year 11 Report** – Week beginning 15th November 2021.
- **Year 11 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 29th November 2021.
- **Year 11 Mock Examinations** - Week beginning 14th March 2022.
- **Year 11 Report issued** – Week beginning 4th April 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

Year 12 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

Year 12 will complete baseline assessments and will also have the opportunity to sit internal examinations after their first term is completed. All examinations will be completed formally in school to replicate their finals in the summer term. **Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.**

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Friday 3rd September (New to Durham Johnston) and Monday 6th September 2021 (Former Y11 at Durham Johnston).
- **Year 12 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 29th September 2021.
- **Year 12 Settling in Report** – Week beginning 15th November 2021.
- **Year 12 Mock Examinations** – Week beginning 10th January 2022.
- **Year 12 Report issued** – Week beginning 31st January 2022.
- **Year 12 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 14th February 2022.
- **Year 12 Mock Examinations** – Week beginning 13th June 2022.
- **Year 12 Report issued** – Week beginning 4th July 2022.

Year 13 - Key Dates and the Shape of the Academic Year

Students have already signed up for their Year 13 courses and have been working hard via Microsoft Teams and we have offered specialist support for those who have are targeting specific jobs, degree course and universities.

Key Dates for this year group:

- **Start of the school year** – Monday 6th September 2021.
- **Year 13 Parent Information Evening** – Week beginning 20th September 2021.
- **Year 13 Mock Examinations** – Week beginning 27th September 2021.
- **Year 13 Report** – Week beginning 18th October 2021.
- **Year 13 Parents' Evening** – Week beginning 8th November 2021.
- **Year 13 Mock Examinations** – Week beginning 28th February 2022.
- **Year 13 Report issued** – Week beginning 28th March 2022.

Please note: Parent Information evenings are led by senior staff and are not parents' evenings. They take the form of presentations in the main hall.

We are very mindful that it has been a difficult year for our students. We are keen to celebrate success, to offer more support to each year group and to make lessons as engaging and well taught as possible. We will also focus very strongly on our ethos and will ensure that all members of our school community are treated respectfully, with kindness and fairly. The following information regarding safeguarding, communication, the use of mobile phones and uniform should offer a clear understanding of both school and parental responsibilities when it comes to each of these important areas of school life.

Safeguarding & Speaking Up

Mr Weaver, Assistant Headteacher, is our Designated Safeguarding Lead. All members of the school are safeguarding trained, with the school's Leadership Team and Year Leaders having enhanced training experience. We take our commitments very seriously and have a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of prejudicial behaviour or harassment. If any student is worried about an issue, they should speak with their Year Leader or a member of the school leadership team. The list of safeguarding staff can also be found in each student's organiser. We encourage students to speak up and, if they observe someone else in difficult circumstances, to never be a bystander.

Students will make mistakes and we will prioritise educating those that do, but we will not accept anyone being made to feel deliberately uncomfortable by others. We have a zero-tolerance attitude towards bullying and a commitment to educate all students so that they can avoid dangerous situations.

School Communication

We will continue to offer regular weekly updates and additional guidance if appropriate. The weekly Friday bulletin will return as of September, outlining extra-curricular opportunities and celebrating student success across the school.

Please write to the school with any new email addresses and telephone numbers so that you can keep up to date with what is happening in school.

In terms of any queries that you may have, please be aware that school staff are unavailable between 8.20 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. and cannot easily respond to telephone calls or emails. We are always happy to communicate with parents and carers if there is an issue or significant development, but it is important to note that the majority of school staff will be working with students before and after those times too. They teach, meet with and safeguard students, attend meetings and plan. We will always reply if you contact us but can rarely do so immediately.

We always try to respond to any query within 3 working days, as is common in most professional organisations. Parents or carers should never arrive at school expecting to see a staff member without a prearranged appointment. Parents and carers doing so will be asked to leave and to arrange an appointment, if appropriate, at a later date and time.

If you have any concerns regarding a safeguarding issue, please make sure that reception staff are aware and we will always act very quickly.

Mobile Phones & Use of Social Media

Our rules regarding mobile phone are very simple. **They are not allowed to be used, seen or heard anywhere on the school site or at any point during the school day.** Any student failing to follow this very clear rule will have their phone confiscated and a letter will be sent home explaining our concern. School provides an opportunity for respite from constant communication and allows student to talk and interact in person. To avoid confusion there are some other very simple rules regarding mobile phones, communication and social media apps:

- No student has permission to film or record any other member of the school community.
- Filming or recording other members of the school community without their consent is unacceptable

- It is completely unacceptable to share pictures, request pictures or bully others online. The school has a zero-tolerance attitude to this form of behaviour.
- It is unacceptable to make unkind, illegal or prejudicial comments about other people based upon their characteristics, background or circumstances.
- As a parent, discuss how your child uses their phone and make sure that they do not behave in any of the unacceptable ways identified above. We emphasise that students should not be bystanders, nor should parents. There is national research into the dangers of letting children keep phones in their room overnight and it is always sensible to discuss what your child is looking at online. These are key parental responsibilities that will help you to safeguard your child.
- We will always offer support and guidance and regular share E-Safety alerts via the school website.
- Discuss the unrealistic nature of relationships and human bodies that are frequently shared online and use internet controls at home to protect your child from unregulated online content.
- Please also encourage your child to think carefully before making negative or thoughtless comments about other students via social media. Parents have responsibility for regulating social media use and for ensuring that there are consequences for offensive and unkind behaviour. As parents or carers, I would also encourage you to avoid negative, inaccurate or provocative comments on social media about other members of the school community. We will continue to offer guidance to students about how to de-escalate situations and to avoid confrontation with others. It is important that parents support us in this and set a good example.

Please can I also encourage you to talk at home about the importance of behaving in a considerate and socially responsible manner on the way to and from school?

We are aware that some students might face difficulties this summer. We have found that the following charities and organisations can provide significant and timely help:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>

<https://www.kooth.com/>

Uniform and Piercings in September 2021

Our uniform is intended to be affordable, fair and based upon all students being members of the same, equal community.

For those of you who will be buying new items of uniform this summer, the uniform requirements are set out in our uniform policy [at this link](#).

Full uniform is to be worn again as of September and, importantly, our uniform has not changed from 2018. Please be aware that students need to start to bring their PE kits again and will change on the days that they have PE. They should not come in wearing PE kit on those days unless we return to protective bubbles. We have emphasised to all students that it needs to be worn in a particular way, and we are committed to be fair and consistent in the language that we use in relation to uniform, and in how we apply the rules for all students. It is always important to review school uniform and we intend to discuss what students wear with representative groups from each year group as the year progresses. To avoid unnecessary issues that can impact upon student learning, please ensure that clothing is not made from stretch lycra or knitted fabrics. Uniform should be functional, appropriate, and allow all students to move around the school freely.

In addition to the above uniform advice, can I request that if your child is intending to get their ears pierced in the summer that they do so at the very beginning of the summer holiday, so that their piercings can heal and be safely removed for September? Piercings are not allowed in school and students are fully aware of this fact. These are small things, but our rules are very clear and students should avoid decisions that will impact upon their ability to learn and progress when they return in September.

Please also note that lockers will be available from September 2021 onwards for all students.

Not accepting the uniform policy is a sign that a student does not want to be part of our community.

It has been an unusual and challenging period for all members of our school community and we will work very hard across the summer to make sure that our students have the guidance, structure and support that they need to be successful in 2021-22. Please check the school website regularly and follow us on Twitter for updates, and encourage your child to check their school email account and Microsoft Teams regularly. For our part, we will continue to find ways to improve our communication and to engage with parents and carers as education continues to be affected by the changing national picture.

We are planning to celebrate the diversity of the school in September and are also thinking carefully about careers. We are keen to share the wide range of backgrounds our students come from and will ask all parents, carers and students to identify the range of countries that their families are from. We are hoping to create a Durham Johnston 'world map' and I would encourage you to share information with us over the summer and in September. In a similar way, we want students to be aware of the full range of jobs and careers that members of our community have, and we will ask parents and carers to share information about their professions and what their jobs entail. We want students to have an understanding of the wide range of opportunities available to them. They won't necessarily understand that, unless they see the wide range of jobs that people linked to the school do.

Finally, there is a strong likelihood that we will have to organise testing in school before the return of students in September. We were very fortunate in March to have a number of excellent volunteers from our community. If you would be willing to volunteer again, please contact the school and use the heading 'Testing Centre Volunteer'. Finally, can I also please make you aware of a survey regarding school transport that our local M.P, Mary Foy, has asked us to share, which you can access [via this link](#).

I hope that you and your family have a good summer and that we can all approach our return in September with a sense of shared purpose and anticipation.

Thank you for your ongoing support, it is greatly appreciated by all school staff.

Yours sincerely,

Mr O'Sullivan



Headteacher:

A J O'Sullivan BA, MA

Deputy Heads:

J Bell BSc, MA
R McFadden MEng
M J Wright BA

Director of Resources:

H Charlton BA, MBA

Assistant Heads:

S A F McArdle BSc
N Weaver BA

