

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you and your family are well and that we all continue to “stay alert” and follow government guidance to help overcome this pandemic.

The past three weeks has seen the vast majority of our **Year 10 and 12 students** come back into school for face-to-face teaching. We are pleased to report this has gone extremely well, with overwhelmingly positive feedback received from students and parents/carers. Safety has been managed positively with all students respecting the processes in place. Students have also talked about how valuable it has been to spend time with their normal class teachers.

This week we have welcomed **Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils** for catchup meetings with form tutors and it has been fantastic to see them in school again after so long being away from school. Many of the them have barely been out of the house for months so were a little anxious coming in but most were very happy as they left.

We have a small but enthusiastic group of pupils attending our **Melrose provision** for a couple of days per week and I know that the Melrose team are in weekly contact with parents about what is best in current circumstances for each individual who is part of the provision.

As has been the case throughout lockdown, we continue to provide a school-based experience for the children of **key workers**. **On 30th of June, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed schools are NOT to open over the summer holidays for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.** “Teachers, support staff and school leaders deserve a break, to recharge and rest” were words that I agreed with wholeheartedly.

By the end of next week Mr Williams will have met with **all of Year 12** to talk them through the UCAS university application process as well as having conversations about alternatives to university for each individual.

Home working will continue to be set on our website or on Google Classroom for **Y7-10 and Y12 students** for the next two weeks. While we are planning for a full return in September it is worth noting that a return to this approach would be needed should there be a local problem, as has been seen in Leicester recently, or if a child had to isolate at home due to being unwell or isolating under “track and trace”.

I wish to celebrate and **pay tribute to you**, our Parents and Carers, and all our staff and students, who have worked in partnership together since the 20 March. We are all very much in this together and, as a school, we will continue to support all of our community and provide opportunities for additional help wherever this is needed, both educationally and emotionally. Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding towards our school at this time.

Those eligible for **Free School Meals** will have received an eCode to cover the period up to 17th July. Provision for free school meals is ordinarily term time only. However, owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government understands that children and parents face an entirely unprecedented situation over the summer. To reflect this, the government are providing for those who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals to receive food vouchers covering the six-week holiday period. If you have received vouchers in lieu of Free School Meals during lockdown, you do not need to apply again to get the summer holiday vouchers, these will come through in the same way as those that you received in June and July.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, announced his plans for all children and young people to **return to full-time education at the start of the Autumn Term**.

We are really excited about the prospect of seeing all our students return in September; our staff have commented on how much they have enjoyed teaching those students who have been allowed to return to school since 15 June and how wonderful it was to meet them as form tutors.

The Department for Education have published supporting guidance that provides schools, colleges and nurseries with details to plan for a full return. The guidance has been developed in consultation with medical experts from Public Health England and sets out a range of measures to protect children and staff.

There is also a recently published document for parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

We will be in touch with outline plans for the return of all our students by the end of term, once we have had chance to digest the new requirements and formulate how we will implement these. I am sure you will understand that our preparation will involve significant planning and preparation. We will need to look closely at how and when the students return, the structure of the day, how students will be taught. You should also be aware that we are expecting a number of additional updates from the DfE throughout August, so in addition to the information we will send home at the end of the term on 16 July, we will send an additional update before we return in September using School Comms and continue to post updates on our school website newsfeed

We recognise that the curriculum will need to be revised in the Autumn Term to cover missed content and to prioritise content within subjects up to and including Key Stage 3. In addition, a wider return to school could exacerbate mental health and wellbeing issues among some pupils. It has become increasingly clear for the need to address these issues proactively and implement a 'recovery curriculum' which focuses on ensuring children feel safe and are ready to learn before or alongside any intensive learning or catch up begins.

The guidance released for September has come just over two weeks from the end of term, leaving little time for school leaders to plan the significant logistical changes that will need to take place to bring pupils back safely, alongside revising their curriculum and planning for the 'catch up'. This increased burden comes on school staff who have worked tirelessly since lockdown began and with only two weeks until the end of term.

Furthermore, the confirmation that the Department for Education have announced that they will go ahead with a full suite of GCSE and A' Level assessments in the November, putting further undue pressure on schools and teaching staff. This is at a time when they need to focus first and foremost on ensuring that school is a physically and mentally safe place and helping students get to a place where they are ready to learn again.

However, you know that we will work to ensure that we are ready to welcome all pupils back in September, in a way that is safe and reflects all the guidance that is available to us.

Have a good week and I will update you further in a letter next week.

Best wishes

Paul Quinn

HEADTEACHER