

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you and your family had a positive VE Bank Holiday; such dates were always very important in my house growing up. My father served in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and was a PoW for 4 years while my Mum worked as a bus conductress during the war. It made last weekend a poignant time personally but one that led to some lovely, socially distanced, conversations with neighbours who I have never spoken to before despite having lived in the same street for over a decade.

Current uncertainty over the wider opening of schools

I am sure that many of you will have watched the Prime Minister's statements on Sunday and Monday and will have read and heard more about the Government's thoughts over the reopening of schools. The Government announced "an ambition" that, potentially from as early as the week commencing 1 June 2020, they will ask secondary schools to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of Year 10 and Year 12 students. These two year groups have been prioritised because they are preparing for key examinations next year and are most at risk of falling behind due to time out of school.

At present, there is no real change to the current guidance around which children should be in school. Regardless of what happens with Year 10 and Year 12, we will still maintain a provision in school for vulnerable students and those whose parents are key workers beyond half term, as we have done throughout this pandemic. We will still be providing work for those who are at home, through our website for Year 7, 8 and 9, and via Google Classroom for Y10 and Y12 as well as some Y9 classes.

As with all other establishments, when there is an extending of the opening of schools, we need clear guidance on how we are to ensure we can keep our children, staff and families safe. School staff unions and professional associations are working closely with Government to ensure that any return to school would be "Covid Secure" and I agree with them that the reopening of schools should depend on scientific reassurance. My understanding is that a joint union meeting with the government's scientific panel takes place today, 15th May. My greatest fear is that there is no national consensus between Government and unions and that it pits school leaders against their staff team who have been magnificent throughout this crisis. Of course, schools will have to reopen at some point, but it needs to be done in a considered and collegiate manner.

In school our leadership team have been planning scenarios relating to Government announcements and, as part of that, we want to seek the views of those impacted. As such, we will be contacting parents of children in Year 10 and Year 12 for their views on the wider opening of schools at the start of next week (please monitor your email for the link to this).

We will continue to keep you informed as more information becomes available but, for now, we will continue to work to provide on-line learning opportunities for your children and we will continue working on our planning for the wider opening of schools at a time when the Government provide the additional detail and assurances that would need to be in place to do that safely.

Uniform

We have been in contact with our uniform suppliers as we fear that it may be particularly difficult to get uniform for next academic year. Some of you have negative experiences when trying to collect uniform at the start of September and the length of the queues even made it into the local press. Therefore, I wanted to have families considering uniform early; this is the message from Emblematic to our parents:

We are currently also taking school orders via email as normal orders@emblematic.co.uk <https://emblematic.co.uk/> shows the following options to parents for this summer

- 1. Free delivery on all orders placed until the 1st July.*
- 2. After that, parents will either pay for delivery to home or use our "Click and Collect" option (starting date to be decided), They will not be able to order with "Delivery to School" as an option.*
- 3. We have put measuring videos on our website, which parents can use to purchase the correct size, using measurements they have taken at home.*
- 4. We currently offer a free returns system, where parents use our website to return items, parents must then make a new order for the correct size (i.e. this is not an exchange service, as garments must be safely stored (Covid-19) before going back into stock)*
- 5. We are also offering a "Click and collect" option in the future from our Benton shop only (date and times to be decided), but plan to stop this mid-August, so we don't have the final rush of the summer with long queue's (that we feel will be unsafe).*
- 6. We will continue to follow the guidance and decide if/when our shops can re-open and what other changes can be safely made.*

Please can you inform all parents of our proposals and express the need to order early (especially this year) so we can deliver all the correct uniform, with plenty of time available for exchanges.

Community School Clothing Scheme

We are aware that there will be some perfectly good uniform in people's homes that we would love to have to help families where there is a need. We want to link to a locally run charity, Community School Clothing Scheme, for any uniform donations that people can make to help those in need. If you have any items of uniform that is still in good condition but that no longer fit, please bring it into school reception where we have some collection bins and we will take things from there.

I hope that you and your family remain safe and well and that we are approaching a time when things become closer to whatever normal will become.

With very best wishes

Paul Quinn