



10 July 2020

Dear Parents

Borlase@home

We are reaching the end of what has been a very long and challenging term for everyone and I would like to thank you all again for your patience and support. We have been delighted to see Year 10 and 12 students back in school over the last few weeks, bringing some life back into the quiet corridors. Year 12 have had the chance to come in for extended sessions in all their A Level subjects which we hope will have helped them understand where to focus their attention over the summer; and we hope they had fun. It cannot have been easy for any student in any year group to stay motivated through this long period of independent study; we are very, very proud of the way everyone has just kept going over the months. It has been lovely too to finally announce our prefect team and our new school captains and vice captains in Imogen Baguley, Leon Tasch, Charlotte Farmer and Olly Gale. They have an exciting challenge ahead!

You will be aware that government guidance is changing all the time as they are responding to a live crisis. As schools, we have worked very hard to plan and prepare for a socially distanced return to school with heightened focus on hygiene. Teachers have developed their skills in the virtual environment and the focus for us, over the last few weeks has been how to teach in a blended environment: some students at home, some at school. Therefore, we are now confident that whatever situation the virus imposes on us, we have the technology and skills ready to deliver teaching and learning to our students. The most recent guidance published this week states that every child must attend school full time from September; this means all children in all year groups. The DfE has asked us, as senior schools, to consider how we prepare our environments to support limiting contact between large groups of students and across several year groups. I have met with head teachers across the county this week and we are all developing how we will manage the return to school in the best way possible for our different settings; we are also sharing ideas and best practices. As a senior leadership team and site team, we are working on the details of how we make Borlase ready for the return. With the full school returning, this will mean making changes to systems, timings and the structure of our school day. (Although the day will remain 8.40 - 3.30; changes will be within the day) This is quite an undertaking; we still have decisions to discuss with our governors before we will have the final details. We are also awaiting further guidance from the government which will be released to schools over the coming weeks. I will keep you informed as things develop.

We are taking the return to school very seriously. Of course we will be working hard to create wider opportunities and a lively, exciting learning environment for everyone but some things will have to change, at least until we are in a safer place.

One of the changes we know we will make is to reduce the amount of times we have movement around the school and the number of times students move around the school by introducing staggered breaks. Key stages and year groups will move separately and supervised from lesson to lesson. Key stages and year groups will have their breaks at separate times to allow less crowding and more frequent cleaning. We will also relay assemblies into tutor bases to avoid bringing large groups together at least for the first term. There will also be changes to some of the school rules around behaviour. I have to say that the students who have attended school have been excellent and mindful of each other. In September, we will be building in time at the start of term to make sure everyone understands the very clear expectations around behaviour required to make everyone feel safe.

Nationally there are still restrictions on some sports but the PE Department are being very imaginative to ensure there will be a chance to exercise and enjoy activities together; the same is true for the performing arts where there will obviously be some limitations on what can do for the Autumn but we will be very creative. Some changes have to be made to planned trips and visits. You may be aware that overnight visits are not allowed next term at least for schools, so planned overnight trips will be postponed. Leaders of trips will contact parents directly to explain details. We are still advised to limit the visitors on site, so schools will not play fixtures next term and pupils from other schools will not visit us. Parent visits will need to be virtual for most instances and our annual open evenings, like all schools across Buckinghamshire, will need to be virtual events.

I don't mean to make returning to school sound like a worrying prospect for your children. It will be lovely for them to be back in school together after all these months of working from home. And we will ensure the joy and fun in learning together is restored for them. But I also wanted to reassure you that we are developing strategies to mitigate risk which we will share with you in full once finalised. On Friday, the last day of term, we usually finish early and next week we will round up in the morning. I need to bring all staff back into school to work in departments on the new changes they have to make to their classrooms again and to share with them the latest changes they need to know before they start their summer preparation. Tutor Time will take place as usual in the morning with a final celebration of Borlase@home before dismissal of the children for the end of term.

In the meantime, we still have year 12 in school and our growing Key Worker School and we still have some virtual events planned before the end of term. The PE and Sports department are planning their leavers event and the Annual Prize Giving will be launched on Borlase YouTube on Thursday, at 6.00 p.m.

I will keep in touch with you all and share all developments. Many thanks for your support and have a lovely weekend,

Kay Mountfield,
Headteacher