



18 September 2020

## **Letter from Headteacher**

Dear Parents and students,

Thank you all for supporting us through the first few weeks of term. I do feel I am counting each successful day one by one and am pleased to reach the end of another week. The students continue to work with the new systems and changes incredibly positively and are to be praised for their collective respect of the rules and each other. There are tweaks we are making to the systems as we progress into term to keep improving them.

It is good to see Year 13 having completed their assessments. They approached these very seriously and are now able to focus on their next steps while continuing their courses. We will be using these results to identify where support may be needed. Likewise teachers are using these early weeks of classes to assess gaps in knowledge and so far are very positive about student progress and work ethic. We will be holding a number of parent information evenings this term to update you on assessment, reporting, teaching and learning and pastoral care and how all this will work this year. These will be virtual events; the dates are published in the calendar but we will send out invitations nearer the time. We also have the usual parents evening appointments in the calendar; again these are scheduled as virtual for this term and we will continue to review. Virtual worked very well for Year 8 last term and the feedback was positive.

Our priorities at school this term are very clear: keeping everyone safe and well and delivering teaching and learning. That does mean that we have started the term slowly in terms of wider opportunities but they will come. Some after school sport has now started and this will grow; we will monitor carefully. Likewise, other clubs will start at school as we get comfortable with the first priorities. Everything does take much longer in this environment. Meticulous cleaning routines and lining up routines, risk assessing, do make even some normally simple activities more challenging to get going. I am very grateful to our staff for being so positive and for stepping into roles they would not usually do to make systems run smoothly.

As we move into term, I anticipate we will inevitably face times when there is a positive, confirmed case at school. Speaking with fellow headteachers in Marlow and in Buckinghamshire who have already had to manage cases has been very helpful and schools are supporting each other with sharing what they have learned. PHE has also been adapting advice as they deal with new incidents. I want to take the opportunity to clarify our approach and our use of bubbles in school.

## Explaining Bubbles and Contact that would result in Self Isolation

We are following the DfE and PHE advice of adopting bubbles. Some senior schools are dividing students into key stages. In our school, we have been able to put in place a system of year group bubbles. We are very pleased with the way the staggered breaks work, giving year groups their designated areas for eating and for activities or chatting with friends. The marquees are invaluable in enabling us to have enough spaces to keep year groups separate and I would like to say a huge Thank You to everyone supporting the Here and Now Fund for making this happen. We are also going through cases and cases of cleaning fluid which does not sound like an exciting fund-raising purchase but it is vital to keep us safe.

The year group bubble system allows the students to enjoy school, interacting with each other in lessons, taking part in practical activities and gradually getting involved in extracurricular activities but confining any *contacts* to students in that year group bubble in the event of a positive case on site. The *contact* of a positive case must self-isolate for 14 days. Where students have had to do this so far, or be at home due to quarantine they have engaged in lessons positively through Borlase@home.

Where students pass/ encounter students from other year groups, they are required to wear a mask and socially distance so that they do not become contacts. We are reminding students again why this is important through training in assemblies on Monday but please do continue to impress on your children why this is important. As a school and as families, we know we need to be able to identify any contact of a positive case in order to protect them and their families. The lanyards worn by the students help us and older students respond quickly if someone has inadvertently found themselves in the wrong area. We are also impressing on students who use public transport of their obligation to wear a mask; please reinforce this too.

Public Health England define contacts as follows:

**Direct close contacts:** individuals who have had **face to face** contact with an infected individual for **any** length of time, **within/ closer than 1 metre**, including being coughed on, a close face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin).

**Proximity contacts:** extended **close contact** (within **1 to 2 metres** for **more than 15 minutes**) with an infected individual.

**Travelling** in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person, or sitting within 2m of them on a bus/ train.

In some year groups it may be easier to identify contacts in smaller groups than year groups and we would always do a risk assessment of any individual case to decide this.

We continue to stay positive and encourage everyone to carry on enjoying school. So many students of all year groups have commented how lovely it is to be back in school and working together. Our aim is to take each day at a time, keeping everyone safe and carrying on teaching and learning as our main priorities.

Many thanks everyone for your continued support,

Stay safe and well,

Kay Mountfield  
Headteacher

