

28th August 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Further to my letter to you earlier in the week, I am writing to you to confirm some details and also include a couple of new updates.

As a reminder, we have a staggered start to the new academic year:

Monday 30 th August	Bank Holiday
Tuesday 1 st September	Development Day (no students in school)
Wednesday 2 nd September	Development Day (no students in school)
Thursday 3 rd September	Year 7 and 11 in school
Friday 4 th September	Year 7, 10 and 11 in school
Monday 7 th September	All year groups in school (First day for Year 8 and 9)

Year 7 students are to wear PE kit for their first day on Thursday 3rd September. All other year groups need to be in full school uniform on their first day.

School starts as normal at 8.45am and finishes at 3.10pm.

The following information is to confirm and explain some of the COVID-19 return to school details.

All students will be taught in year group 'bubble' areas of the school. The majority of the students lessons will be within the same group of classrooms. They will move between the limited number of 'bubble' rooms, so that lessons which are taught in sets can continue to be taught appropriately and also so that students who have chosen their options subjects can continue to have those lessons delivered. There will be some specialist subject lessons which may be taught in subject specialist rooms, in which case appropriate cleaning will be in place. The majority of the movement around site will be done by the staff.

In line with Government guidance, all classrooms (except ICT suites), have been rearranged to ensure that all of the students will be facing the front, not set out in groups of tables where the students would be facing each other.

Break and lunch times have been staggered and a timetable put together to mean that only one year group 'bubble' will be using a canteen space at once. Each year group has been assigned a different outdoor space for social time as well as a different outdoor space to wait in the morning before school (which I shared with you in my previous letter).

One area which has had a more recent update is related to the use of face coverings. You may be aware through formal media coverage or through social media, that on Tuesday 25th August, the Government announced a change in their stance on face coverings in secondary schools. The guidance was then updated the following day. This guidance basically sets out two scenarios.

One is where a school is in an area which has local restrictions in place. The guidance states that

'Consistent with WHO's new advice, schools and colleges should take additional precautionary measures in areas where the transmission of the virus is high. These areas are defined as [areas of national government intervention](#). Information on areas with a status of 'intervention' can be found in the [National coronavirus \(COVID-19\) surveillance report](#), which is updated every week.

In these intervention areas, in education settings where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors) and pupils when moving around indoors, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. As in the general approach, it will not usually be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and they may inhibit teaching and learning.'

Therefore, I can confirm that should we reach a scenario where we have local restrictions imposed, we will be following the guidance above and all staff, students and visitors will be expected to wear a face covering in communal areas.

The second scenario is obviously where a school is not in an area where local restrictions are in place, which is the current situation for us. The guidance for this is as below

'Nationwide, the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary in education settings generally because a system of control, applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures. Schools and colleges will have the discretion to require face coverings in indoor communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.'

Given the current Government data, the risk on the Isle of Wight is very low in comparison to an area which is having local restrictions enforced. Therefore, we have taken the decision to allow the voluntary use of face coverings in communal areas for students and for staff. This however does mean that face coverings must be worn following the Government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

An extract is below:

A face covering should:

- *cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably*
- *fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face*
- *be secured to the head with ties or ear loops*
- *be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton*
- *ideally include at least two layers of fabric (the World Health Organisation recommends three depending on the fabric used)*
- *unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged*

When wearing a face covering you should:

- *wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on*

- *avoid wearing on your neck or forehead*
- *avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with your mouth and nose, as it could be contaminated with the virus*
- *change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it*
- *avoid taking it off and putting it back on a lot in quick succession (for example, when leaving and entering shops on a high street)*

When removing a face covering:

- *wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before removing*
- *only handle the straps, ties or clips*
- *do not give it to someone else to use*
- *if single-use, dispose of it carefully in a residual waste bin and do not recycle*
- *if reusable, wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric*
- *wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed.*

I would like to also remind you of some of the measures that are in place to support a safe environment.

No-one displaying symptoms of COVID-19 is allowed on site. Anyone displaying symptoms

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

must follow the Government guidance and self-isolate for at least 10 days from when symptoms started and arrange to have a test. All other household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the household became ill or if they do not have symptoms, from the day their test was taken. Full guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

All students, staff and visitors are expected to adhere to good hand and respiratory hygiene by washing hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser available and following the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' routine.

I do understand that for some, the fact that their child will be returning to school will be an emotional and potentially anxious time, but it is important that children do return to school, continue their learning in a classroom environment with their teachers and their peers, learn to understand and manage the concept of risk and acknowledge the part that we all individually play in trying to enable society to function within the 'new normal'.

I will be expecting students to behave appropriately and show respect to each other and to members of staff.

Please could I remind you that in line with many organisations we are discouraging cash to be used on site. Wherever possible parents should use our cashless payment systems. Details of Schoolgateway can be found on our websites.

I am aware that there has been some concern around bus routes and bus times. I would encourage all parents in the first instance to contact School Transport, which is part of the Local Authority.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that we have, at all times, followed Government guidance, and we will continue to do so, as and when this is created or updated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr-Burman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Parr-Burman
Executive Headteacher