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Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you enjoyed the newsletter yesterday - it was great to be able to celebrate our IB results and think about the exciting futures our students have ahead of them. Yesterday's newsletter also typified the weekly offering of competitions, information, advice and support from so many areas of school life, despite the circumstances we are living through.

There has been a great deal of planning and consulting between schools since Gavin Williamson announced the publication of guidance for opening schools fully in September. Today I have received the local authority risk assessment for schools to work with as we prepare for full opening, just as we did in preparation for opening to years 10 and 12. This fulfills the DfE guidance, meets the health and safety requirements of the HSE and has involved teachers' unions to ensure that every school is able to open safely in their own context in September.

We have a great deal of work ahead of us to ensure that we mitigate risk sufficiently to enable us to open fully in September as planned. (The new years 7 and 12 return on Wednesday 2nd September and the rest of the school joins them on Thursday 3rd September.)

In the meantime, I would like to give a very brief sketch of our plans and to ask you to start planning on a couple of fronts too.

The guidance for full opening makes it clear that all schools should be offering the full curriculum to all students. This means that we will operate a full timetable, that our classrooms will be full again and it is made very clear that attendance is compulsory. I know that some of you, parents and students, may be nervous about returning to a full school; all I can do as your headteacher is to assure you that we are taking all reasonable steps now, and over the summer, to ensure your safety when you return. As lockdown restrictions ease, we will become more accustomed to being around more people more of the time but I know that some will find the busy school environment a considerable extra step to take at first.

We will expect students to attend in school uniform as usual and with only essential equipment. We will be encouraging students to bring their own snacks and packed lunches in the first few weeks; the canteen is likely to be open only at lunchtime and perhaps only for cold food at first. More details nearer the time.

In addition to the control measures around hygiene, track and trace, etc. the principles of the guidance focus on two elements - 1) keeping year group 'bubbles' separate and 2) maintaining social distance where possible.

To support 1) we plan to operate staggered starts so that different year groups arrive 10 minutes apart and through different entrances. Similarly, we will operate staggered finishes at the end of the

day. The school day will therefore vary a little for students but the maximum will be 8.30am to 3.30pm. We will also operate staggered break times and staggered lunch slots (within staggered lunch times), to separate year groups as far as possible.

To support 2) we will focus on the safe movement of students around the site and use outside routes when possible. We will minimise and manage queuing (eg. for lunch) carefully. We will not hold assemblies at first although the guidance does permit year group assemblies since they are preserving the 'bubble'.

We will have enhanced cleaning regimes and will preserve a space around the teacher's desk in which students will not be permitted; some of our staff remain very vulnerable and will need to be protected carefully.

We have been planning for some time about how to support students in September so that there are no significant gaps which will prevent good progress. For those taking GCSE examinations in the summer of 2021 (new year 11), Ofqual is consulting on ways to reduce content to help mitigate the effects of the past few months. The IB is taking similar steps for those who will be in year 13 in September. Schools are being told explicitly not to reduce the number of GCSEs that students are studying; reductions in content or choices of topics on which to answer in exams should mean that students are not disadvantaged.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that extra-curricular activities, including many house activities, will be able to take place at first. So many aspects of school life will be under review as we move through the first term but our intention is to err on the side of safety and see how circumstances develop over time.

There are many more issues and details to consider but I hope this gives you a flavour of our initial planning. When I write again in more detail, I will also reinforce the importance of messages about hygiene and of children not attending school if they have any of the relevant symptoms.

Until then, may I leave you to consider a couple of points. Transport is a potential issue; we are told that buses may be running at 60% capacity so about 40% of parents whose children normally travel by bus may need to consider other modes of transport and encourage walking and cycling if they are unable to drop them off by car. Secondly, while we are heavily stocked with cleaning supplies, in practice, it would be very helpful if students could bring their own supply of wipes and sanitising gel with them to help keep their immediate environment clean.

Thank you for reading these initial ideas. You will, of course, have many questions but I ask that you await my promised more detailed communication in the hope that many questions will then be answered. You may wish to read the [DfE guidance for parents](#) in anticipation.

I hope this has given you a sense of the direction we are heading. As we plan ahead, I am very excited by the prospect of finally having everyone back in school, even though it will be in a 'new normal.'

Best wishes,



Steve Elphick