

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents & Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well.

### **Update on 2020/21 return to school in September**

Yesterday the much anticipated guidance from the Department for Education was published on how secondary schools should plan for all students to return to school in September. The result of the guidance is that we now have lots of points to consider and many decisions to make in terms of what our full return will look like. The media was reporting in advance that schools would need to create what have been dubbed 'Year Group Bubbles', where there is no mixing between year groups. This has indeed turned out to be the main request. This is not straightforward in a secondary school environment where students move from room to room and are taught by different teachers in a specialist environment e.g. Technology, PE, Science, Art and Photography etc. Remaining in one room is not really an option.

To achieve this separation and therefore enable a return for all year groups, schools have been asked to consider employing a range of measures including:

- Staggered arrival and start times for different year groups.
- Staggered finish and departure times for different year groups.
- Some year groups having lunch or break at different times to avoid mixing in communal spaces e.g. the canteen.
- Changing the structure of the day to avoid large groups moving around the school at the same time.
- Adjusting the content of some subjects to enable fulfilling the advice within the government guidance.

We had already prepared the timetable for 2020/21, but it looks as though having over 1,500 students arriving at the same time and moving between lessons at the same time is not going to enable us to achieve the separation of year groups that the 'Bubble' approach demands. **We completely understand that this is necessary and that the highest priority of getting all students back into school must be met.** We also know that the time away from school has been very hard for our students and that for many families this has created real difficulties in looking after children and keeping them engaged. The knock-on effect of lockdown restrictions in some families has meant that some parents have been unable to work or have even lost jobs in some cases. We have also seen a 12% increase in the number of families who are now receiving the support of Free School Meals as a result of these financial pressures.

I hope you understand that the planning of how we can facilitate a return for all students is going to take a lot of thought. In the coming days and weeks I will be meeting with my Leadership Team, other Trust leaders, staff at Dorset Council and other Dorset Secondary Headteachers as we consider how we can get it right for our students at Budmouth. Every school has a different context, different student and staff numbers and its own curriculum to deliver. As soon as I am in a position to share more detail with you, I will do so. **However, I want to reassure you that we will ensure that all year groups can return, even if their day-to-day experience has to be altered.** The term dates for 2020/21 were shared back in January to enable families to make plans. If we have to make any alterations to the published start date in order for us to get this right for each year group, then I will let you know in due course. At the present time the start date for our new Year 7 and our 6<sup>th</sup> Form Registration Day is Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September and for all other year groups it is Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September. Thank you for your patience and understanding with this.

In preparation for our eventual return in September, all teaching staff were involved in some trauma training last Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June. This 'Supporting the Return to School' training prepares our staff in supporting our students' transition back to school, understanding the impact of the pandemic on behaviour and how to reaffirm a sense of connection and belonging.

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### **Exam Results Days**

6<sup>th</sup> Form Results Day is 13<sup>th</sup> August and GCSE Results Day is 20<sup>th</sup> August. We very much want to give the results out 'in person' and as close as possible to a normal way. It is on these days that students sometimes need immediate and important advice from staff about their next steps and choices. Mr Henman and Mr Hudson are planning how this can be done within social distancing guidelines and will write to you nearer the time. OFQUAL has now confirmed that examinations can be taken in all subjects in the Autumn Term if students are dissatisfied with the grade that the Exam Board has awarded them. They have not yet confirmed if there will be any process of appeal. See the separate letters for further detail on this.

### **Junior Prizegiving**

This inaugural event was due to be on 21<sup>st</sup> October and although this cannot take place, we are still going to award the prizes for each subject in Years 7, 8 and 9, together with awards for effort and other contributions. I will be writing to all of the winners before the end of term to congratulate them and when we return, we will find an appropriate way to present these awards.

### **Sports Presentation Evening**

This was also due to be held for the first time on 8<sup>th</sup> July. Finishing in March it would not have been right to award prizes for Individuals of the Year, Team of the Year, Young Leaders of the Year and other awards, with so much of the sporting calendar left incomplete. We very much hope this event can make its debut in the Summer Term of 2021.

### **Staff Leavers and Appointments**

In our English Team, Chloe Driver and Alexia O'Mara are moving onto new opportunities in September. I am delighted that Steve Bassett who has been with us this year covering the maternity leave of Sophie Ives and Lucy England will be staying with us on a permanent basis to teach English and Film Studies.

We send our best wishes to Martin Skipper who is taking a well-earned retirement at the end of the academic year. Teaching was Martin's second vocation having joined the profession after a career in the Police. Martin has been a member of our Science Team since September 2007 and has also supported staff as a union representative for the NASUWT.

In my letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> June I announced that Nita Dooley will be taking up the position of Director of Inclusion and SEND next term. This vacancy arose because of the decision by Pete McCarthy to retire at the end of this term. Pete has been a stalwart of Budmouth starting his career teaching English back in 1989! Pete became leader of our specialist Asperger's Base in 2000 and his work supporting some of our most vulnerable students will long be remembered and much missed. Thank you for everything Pete.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Zillah Rainback, has taken the decision to retire at the end of term. Zillah has worked at Budmouth since 2014. Thank you to Zillah for working with school staff and external agencies in keeping our young people safe. Mike Hoffmann (VP) will assume the responsibility of DSL.

We also say a fond farewell and thank you to Sarah Ford who has worked at Budmouth for twenty years and has always done a brilliant job in the different roles she has undertaken, most recently as our Senior Exams' Officer. Julia Baker who has been working closely with Sarah in recent years will become, from September, Senior Exams' Officer.

Ali Wisden, our Receptionist, is retiring at the end of this term. Ali joined Budmouth in 1989 and with 31 years' service has more than earned a rest! Thank you for everything you have done during that time Ali and for always answering the phone with that calm voice which we will miss. Lucy Churchill has been appointed to the post of Receptionist and Administrator from September and will be known to many of our parents and students, as she is currently working in the Sports Centre.

### **And finally...**

I hope to be able to provide an update on our plan for the new term soon. We now have an average of 180 students attending each day and we are all looking forward to having all of our students back.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert