

28th September 2020

Dear Parent and Carer

As we approach the end of our first month back I do hope that your child has enjoyed being back at school and is in the swing of more normal day-to-day routines. We remain very pleased with the way that the students have returned and got straight back to learning. At the current time, our attendance stands at 97%, which is very pleasing given the circumstances. I would like to share the following updates:

Covid-19

It has probably not escaped your attention that the national infection rate has risen significantly in recent weeks which has resulted in new measures of restriction in the wider society. We are fortunate that Dorset remains less affected than many other parts of the country. However, we are seeing an increase in the number of students and staff who are having to self-isolate while they wait for a test because either they, or a family member, are displaying symptoms. I know it has been frustrating in some cases where the wait for a test to be received and then be processed has been very long. It remains the case that, as yet, no Budmouth students or staff have received a positive test for Covid-19.

At the moment we have not been in a position where we have been unable to cover an absent colleague. However, if rates of absence were to increase, this would become more problematic and we already have some schools in Dorset who have had to partially close to some students in order to remain open. East Dorset has been more greatly affected so far. Hearing the experiences of other schools (and universities) only makes us more resolved to keep applying our new systems consistently to promote safe practice and we will continue to review these as we go.

Year 7

I would like to celebrate the excellent start that our new Year 7 has made. It has been lovely being able to find them all in one place (the Maths corridor) and they have impressed everyone with the way they have settled into secondary school and begun their new studies. It is a shame that the older students in their 'schools' have not been able to meet them properly in assemblies; we look forward to that being able to happen. If they continue their time at Budmouth the way they have started, then they will do very well indeed!

Exams in summer 2021

We know that our Year 11 and Year 13 students are very keen to find out when their GCSE and A' Level exams will take place next summer. This has still not been confirmed and as soon as we know the final detail, we will share this information. The Exam Boards are giving some consideration to starting the exams later in the summer term than usual, to allow students more time to complete their studies and be 'exam ready'. Individual subjects are sharing their plans with schools e.g. reducing the amount of content to be learned and providing a greater choice of questions in exam papers. Again, all these things are yet to be confirmed and we look forward to final clarification.

Clubs

We have been pleased to have made a start back with our extra-curricular programme. Despite the new constraints we do hope that our students will be able to take some opportunity to do something beyond the normal school day. There are some activities where guidance needs to be provided to us before they can start back e.g. Combined Cadet Force. Not being able to mix year groups is an issue for many activities. Although our sports teams are glad to be back practising and having fun, sadly they still cannot compete against other schools.

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Face Coverings

It remains the Department for Education's guidance that face coverings do not need to be worn in school. I am aware that some Dorset schools have made them compulsory in areas of greater congestion outside of the classroom e.g. walking in the corridors. Our position has not changed and it remains the case that students can choose to wear a face covering in general circulation and in classrooms. Those who have chosen to do so have had support and guidance from Mr Abbott, our Medical Officer. A reminder that students do need to wear one if they are using public transport, or entering shops. Our Trust has asked all students to carry one as a matter of good practice and I did advise that although we are in bubbles, if there was a fire alarm these would be broken and social distancing could not be guaranteed. In this instance it would be advisable to wear a face covering.

Lunch Uptake

We have been a little surprised at the significant increase in the number of students buying their lunch from the canteen. Our Catering Manager, Simon Collins, says he and his team have never produced, or sold, as much food in our lunchtime service. An extra oven has been purchased to cope with the demand. Talking to students there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the new biometric system is making it much quicker to be served. Secondly, as money is now being added to student accounts, it means that money is not being spent on sweets and snacks on the way to and from school. Thirdly, students are reporting that the new staggered lunches mean they enjoy a quieter and less stressful experience when using one of the four eating areas. In particular, it seems that Year 7 and Year 8 students are now much more confident about queuing and eating in their designated area. One important plea from our catering team is to ensure that students have checked their balances and have sufficient funds in their account to pay for their meal.

Open Mornings and Open Evening

Letters have been sent to the Primary Schools informing them that the current situation has forced ourselves, and the other secondary schools, to cancel planned information events. This is obviously very disappointing and we hope that many of these children and parents will already have had the chance to visit us at some stage. On Tuesday and Wednesday this week we are making a short information video which will enable prospective parents and students to take a look at Budmouth. We will be placing this on our website for everyone to see. I am sure that our students will be less camera shy than the staff. It is not everyone's idea of fun to be filmed in action at work! We hope that the video is useful and can be enjoyed as well.

Non-student INSET Day

There have been no changes to our term dates since we published them last year and a reminder that **Friday 2nd October** is a non-student day.

Head Students

Finally, I would like to congratulate our new student leadership teams for Turing, Hawking, Shelley and Attenborough. They are facing more of a challenge this year as they have less direct access to their younger 'school' colleagues. I wish them all the best with their new responsibilities.

Turing Head Girl: Naomi Harris, Head Boy: Casey Bardell. Deputies: Charlotte Moore and Ben Moore

Hawking Head Girl: Emily French, Head Boy: Joe Hedges. Deputies: Brinley Doyle and Kerry Kemmett.

Shelley Head Girl: Yeeannon Quarry, Head Boy: Harry Harris. Deputies: Kate O'Shea and Isaac McDermot.

Attenborough Head Girl: Amelia Sheppard, Head Boy: Ted Paul, Deputies: Jessica Bullimore and Tyrees Fisher

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert