

23rd October 2020

Dear Parent and Carer

Half Term Holiday

The end of the first half term seems to have come around very quickly indeed! I have been asked if there is any possibility that we might be having an extra week after half term with the school remaining shut to act as what has been called a 'circuit breaker'. This was recently announced in Northern Ireland. I can confirm that there has been no indication that this will happen in England. If there was to be any change in this position I will, of course, let you know immediately. The situation in England is a little different, as local authorities publish their own term dates and this means that the week of the half term holiday is not the same in all areas.

Coronavirus

Although we all hoped the new academic year would bring about a reduction in the rate of infection, sadly this has not been the case. Even though Dorset remains at 'medium' level in terms of risk, we cannot ignore the fact that there has been an increase in the infection rate in our area, which has now started to affect local schools. Although at the time of writing we have not had a positive test amongst our staff and students, it would seem unrealistic to think that this will stay the case forever. All we can do is continue to be vigilant, follow the rules for our area and keep following the best practice in relation to what has been called: Hands-Face-Space. As of last week, parents collecting children from primary schools in Dorset have to wear a face covering on school premises. This is not the case for secondary schools, and I would like to thank you all for your brilliant response to our start of term request of not coming onto the site on foot to collect your child and that if you are picking them up by car, that you stay in your vehicle. This has been much appreciated.

As we are in an area that is currently classified as being at 'medium' alert level, the wearing of a face covering in school remains non-compulsory, however, students and staff may wear one if they choose to. We have previously advised that students should carry a face covering as if they wish to use public transport, or enter a shop, they will be required to wear one. We also advised that if there was ever a time where social distancing could not be guaranteed e.g. a fire drill, then they may wish to protect themselves. It is worth noting that if the alert status of the area was to rise to 'high' or 'very high' then the wearing of a face covering in indoor areas of higher congestion e.g. corridors or queuing in the canteen, would become compulsory. There may be some cases of students (and staff) who are exempt from wearing a face covering due to personal health reasons. If you have any queries about this please do contact our Medical/Health & Safety Officer Justin Abbott: jabbott@budmouth-aspirations.org.

New Bubble Areas

We have decided to rotate the spaces being used for teaching in Key Stage 3 after half term. This seems to be fair and will also enable our new Year 7 to get to know a different area of the site. There are no changes to the timing of the school day for any year group and Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 have been left in their current 'bubble' areas.

- Year 7 will be based in Clare Tower and will now arrive (and depart) at the main gate, walk through the playground to the Clare Hall area and from there go straight to class, which will start at 9am. They will have their lunch in Clare Hall.
- Year 8 will be based in the Hub (Science). Year 8 students' new arrival and departure will be the Everdene gate and students will be asked to line up in front of the Hub at 8.55am. They will have lunch in Everdene Hall.
- Year 9 will be based in the Hub (Maths). They will continue to arrive via the main gate, but we will ask them to walk in front of the Sports Hall and down towards the Hub. They will no longer be required to line up before lessons and they can go straight to class which will start at 8.40am. Year 9 will continue to have lunch in Clare Hall.

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Video

You may have already seen our short video in lieu of not being able to open the site for our usual Open Mornings and Open Evenings this year. If you have not seen it, you can find it on the front page of our website. Our students have been having fun trying to spot themselves. Our 6th Form team are now putting something together to share with our own Year 11 students at Budmouth, as well as those at other local schools.

Key Stage 4 and 5 examinations

Last week the government confirmed that GCSE and A' level examinations are planned to go ahead next summer. We had been waiting for confirmation, as the previous week Scotland confirmed that it would not be holding its own version of GCSEs. We have been advised that the exams have been put back to start three weeks later than normal and that the majority will all be scheduled to take place between 7th June and 2nd July. Individual subjects will now confirm if these will result in any changes to their subject and how it will be examined. Mr Hudson (GCSE) and Mr Henman (6th Form) will be writing separately to parents and students to confirm the key changes. The dates of results will be: Tuesday 24th August for A' level and Friday 27th August for GCSE.

FAB!

We are keen to get our 'Friends and Associates of Budmouth' group back up and running in a 'virtual' fashion. After forming at the start of the last academic year, we were able to hold three very constructive meetings before closure brought us to a halt. Marcel Ciantar and Charlotte Reed will be contacting last year's members to agree a date. If any new parents are keen to join then please email mciantar@budmouth-aspirations.org. The format of the meeting will depend on the numbers available. Large group 'virtual' meetings can be very hard to manage, as I have found out in recent months from experience!

Year 11 Raising Achievement Evening

As previously stated, this face to face event had to be cancelled. However, we have been putting together the information in a different format and Mr Hudson has written to Year 11 parents to explain where and when this can be accessed.

Associate Principal

Congratulations to Mr Hoffmann who has been appointed to this position following the interview process this week. I am confident that Budmouth will be in safe hands during any time that I am undertaking duties as the Regional CEO South West. Mr Hoffmann is a very experienced senior leader having already worked as a Deputy Head and Acting Headteacher, before he joined Budmouth earlier this year.

Parent Governor

I am delighted to report that the South West Regional Board Parent Governor representing the secondary phase will be a Budmouth parent. Thank you very much to Simon Browne for putting himself forward and agreeing to take on this very important role. With Simon's permission, I am sharing his application statement to tell you a bit more about him:

'I have lived in the Weymouth & Portland area all of my life and am an ex-pupil of Budmouth Academy/Weymouth Grammar School, I am enthusiastic about schools providing the best environment for children to work and develop in, and would use my time as a governor to ensure that this is the case at Budmouth Academy. I would aim to challenge the Academy to continuously improve its standards. I have 29 years of work experience within the Civil Service and believe I would be competent in dealing with the procedural aspects of the governor role. I have adjudicated on disciplinary & promotion panels within my organisation and for most of my career have worked in a fraud investigation role, dealing with criminal investigations, and more latterly as a manager/team leader. I have had to be adaptable in these roles, dealing with a rapidly changing environment that has been all the more important in the COVID-19 world that we are presently experiencing.

Outside of work my interests are mainly sport related, having been actively involved in the participation of sports such as football and cricket from an early age. I have had roles in football management at semi-professional clubs, and I currently hold the position of chairman of Weymouth Cricket Club as well as being a member of the Association of Cricket Officials (ACO).

Happy Retirement to Ron Dansey

A day some thought might never come, finally has! Ron Dansey is leaving Budmouth on 30th October after 25 years as our Site Manager. There is nothing about the buildings and site at Budmouth that Ron does not know. He will be fondly remembered by staff and students alike. Always smiling (often whistling) no job was too big, or too small for Ron. I am personally very grateful to Ron for delaying his retirement by a few months and agreeing to stay on over the summer and during this first half term, as there was so much work to do to rearrange the site and make it safe. Thank you for everything Ron, you deserve a long and happy retirement.

Maths Appointments

Mrs Paton will be starting her maternity leave shortly after half term. I am pleased to inform you that Pete Scott will be joining us to cover this absence. Pete is no stranger to Budmouth, having previously taught in the Maths Department. We have also made an additional appointment in Maths this week with the creation of a new post. Nina Gould will be joining us in January 2021. Nina is also well known to Budmouth and completed her training here in 2019 before going onto her first post at Blandford. Nina used to work in our Sports Centre, plays rugby for Weymouth and is very excited to be coming back.

And finally...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support during this first half term. I think it is fair to say that many of the students and staff were a little bit apprehensive about coming back to school in September. However, I think that going into the holiday everyone is feeling some relief at being back into the swing of things. I hope the children and you, if you get the chance, have a good half term break.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert