



14<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I hope that you and those around you remain well. I write to inform you of some timely reminders and important updates in response to the revised Department for Education guidance for schools and childcare settings that comes into effect on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May.

**Key messages in this letter:**

- **Start of Term 5**
- **Uniform**
- **Year 11 and Year 13 'Chances to Shine' as part of Teacher Assessed Grades 2021**
- **Summary of the DfE Updated School Operating Guidance Changes for Step 3 of the Covid Roadmap**
- **Control Measures**
- **Face Coverings**
- **Changes to our Year Group Zones from Friday 28th May and in Term 6**
- **7<sup>th</sup> June Teacher Development Day Reminder**
- **Year 11 Provision Offer after May Half Term Update**
- **Mental Health Awareness Week 10<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> May**
- **Operation Sceptre – Knife Crime Awareness**

**Start of Term 5**

It was really pleasing to see our students return so positively to school after the Easter break. The dry weather for the first few weeks of term have certainly helped in ensuring a really positive first half of the term. Although we now seem to be experiencing April's showers I am sure they will not dampen the positive learning attitudes displayed so far this term.

**Uniform**

Many thanks for your support of our uniform expectations following last week's letter from Mr Smith. In general we've been very pleased with the standard of uniform but there do remain a few issues (especially relating to blazers and PE kit) and we need these to be resolved as a matter of urgency please. Do contact Tutors, the Head of Year 7 or Heads of House if you have any problems being able to purchase any items of uniform.

**Year 11 and Year 13 'Chances to Shine' as part of Teacher Assessed Grades 2021**

You will be aware that, at the moment, our students in Year 11 and 13 are hard at work with their teachers undertaking 'Chance to Shine' assessments as part of their portfolio of grade evidence for this year's alternative to GCSE and A Level examinations, TAGs (Teacher assessed Grades).

This is a vast undertaking and is involving compiling pieces of work from previous assessments undertaken this year, alongside preparing for their final 'Chance to Shine' assessments. It's a

stressful time for all, but staff, students, parents and carers are to be congratulated on their determination and support of each other – a real joint collaboration. The students have been wonderful and we wish them all the best for their assessments in the remaining two weeks.

### **Summary of the DfE Updated School Operating Guidance Changes for Step 3 of the Covid Roadmap**

On Monday night, following the Prime Minister's confirmation that we are moving into Step 3 of the Covid roadmap on 17th May, the DfE updated its school's operational guidance to reflect what this will mean for schools.

A summary of the key points are as follows (all apply from 17 May):

#### **Face coverings**

*Face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils in classrooms or communal areas in all schools, and for staff in classrooms. Face coverings should continue to be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern.*

**(Please see my further point below about our Face Covering Policy)**

#### **Attendance**

*School attendance continues to be mandatory for all pupils and the usual rules on school attendance apply. This includes parents' duty to ensure their child regularly attends school, and schools' and local authorities' ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, for poor attendance.*

*Schools and local authorities should continue to communicate clear expectations around attendance to families, identify pupils at risk of disengagement and develop plans to re-engage them.*

*As restrictions begin to lift, we know some families may be looking to take holidays during term time. As usual, parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school on holiday in term time.*

#### **Pupils abroad who are unable to return**

*This new section sets out expectations on schools around pupils who are out of the country and are currently unable to return.*

#### **Educational visits**

*Schools can undertake domestic residential education visits from 17 May. Children should be kept within their consistent groups (bubbles) during the visit. A new annex to the guidance (Annex C) sets out the conditions that should be met when planning and undertaking a residential educational visit. The government also recommends that schools do not go on any international visits this academic year up to and including 5 September 2021.*

#### **Transitional, taster and open days**

*These can now take place, subject to thorough risk assessments, ensuring they are run in line with a school's system of controls and the government guidance.*

#### **Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity**

*Indoor wraparound provision and extra-curricular activities for children can now take place in groups of any number. However, it remains important to continue to minimise mixing between children, where possible.*

### Music, dance and drama – performances

*If planning an indoor or outdoor face-to-face performance in front of a live audience, you should follow the latest advice in the working safely during Covid-19 in the performing arts guidance. If planning an outdoor performance you should also give particular consideration to the guidance on delivering outdoor events.*

### **Control Measures**

Apart from the changes in the updated operational guidance, referenced above, there have been **no other changes or relaxation to the system of safety control measure requirements in place within schools.**

This means that all our existing control measures, e.g. hand washing hygiene controls, cleaning protocols, ventilation, social distancing measures, year group bubbles and zones, use of twice weekly home LFD tests etc remain in place on May 17<sup>th</sup> and all staff and students should continue to adhere to them to reduce the risks of transmission for everyone.

We have been in the very fortunate position of reporting no positive Covid cases within school that have required year group bubbles to self-isolate in the last four weeks. I have no doubt that this is as a result of the Covid-19 safety control measures we have in place, combined with the excellent response from our students and your support of our procedures; thank you.

### **Face Coverings**

Although the guidance now allows for some relaxation of the requirements for all staff and students to wear face coverings, I have decided that we will not change our current face covering policy on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May and we will continue with our existing mask wearing procedures until the May Half Term, in two weeks' time, when we will review this position again.

With news of increasing concern about a new Covid variant and increasing rates of transmission in some parts of the country and the imminent further relaxation of some lockdown restrictions on Monday, face coverings playing a key role in school transmission control measures, the close proximity of the half term break, the continuation of Year 11 and Year 13 participation in their crucial 'Chance to Shine' assessments, SAGE scientists last week emphasising the "importance" of mask wearing in schools in the coming months and endeavouring to keep our children, staff and you safe whilst remaining open, continuing with our mask wearing policy for two more weeks seemed like the right approach for continuing to help keep on top of transmission rates in our community.

I fully appreciate that this decision will result in juxtaposed student and parental opinion, as there was when we introduced compulsory mask wearing last year way in advance of other schools and before the government guidance made it a requirement. The issue remains complicated, especially when the government's decision appears to contradict the published scientific evidence and when there are valid reasons on both sides of the wearing of face coverings in school debate. I recognise this and am aware that there is not a solution that will generate unanimous agreement but I again seek your continued support of our safety procedures.

### **Changes to our Year Group Zones from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May and in Term 6**

With the conclusion of Year 11 and 13 'Chance to Shine' assessments at the end of Term 5, increased classroom space capacity in Term 6 due to Year 11 and Year 13 no longer being required to attend school in person/be formally taught daily, we have decided to take the opportunity to move some of our year group zones to improve the teaching and learning experience.

In brief, the main change is that we will be relocating Year 8 into the Year 11 Zone (effective on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May) and there will be some other more minor changes to break/lunch/toilet arrangements for Year 9 and Year 10. We are in the process of putting together more detailed procedural instructions describing the changes for staff, students and parents which will be communicated in due course.

### **7<sup>th</sup> June Teacher Development Day Reminder**

A polite reminder that we have an extra Teacher Development Day planned for Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June so Term 6 will resume for students on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Year 11 Provision Offer after May Half Term Update**

Further to my letter home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, I wanted to provide a further update on our planning for the provision for Year 11 students between the completion of their Year 11 'Chances to Shine' assessments on 27<sup>th</sup> May and their official DfE leaving date of Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June as follows:

- 28<sup>th</sup> May: Year 11 come into school for a short celebration event in S Block Hall before returning home
- W/B 7<sup>th</sup> June: Remote Learning Offer
- W/B 14<sup>th</sup> June: Remote Learning Offer
- W/B 21<sup>st</sup> June: C6th Induction Week for all C6th Applicants / Remote Learning Offer for all non C6th Applicants

The remote learning offer will not involve live lessons or recorded content produced by staff but instead will be made up of a suite of online resources/activities covering a variety of topics, including careers advice and guidance, whereby students have a choice of what topics to engage in. There will be no requirement for students to submit work to staff.

Mrs Cooper is currently planning the C6th Induction week. As part of this, it will be a requirement for any Year 11 students wishing to progress to our Sixth Form to attend a formal 'Extended Sixth Form Induction' in the week 21st - 25th June. This will allow C6th applicants a chance to gain a really good 'taste' of Sixth Form life and the courses that they have chosen. More specific details will be sent to Year 11 and their parents and carers soon.

### **Mental Health Awareness Week**

As you may have noticed on our Instagram stories, we have been engaging with Mental Health Awareness Week this week. The welfare of our students is always our number one priority and this has been so much more important throughout this very unusual academic year with the impacts of the pandemic. So leading into this week there have been a series of assemblies and tutor time activities to support our students and staff mental health.

Much of the programme this week, during tutor time and in PSHE lessons, has focused on the great work of the Mental Health Foundation [click link here](#). The return to outside and appreciating our environment is a great way to improve mental health.

### **Operation Sceptre – Knife Crime Awareness**

The police are currently running a knife and weapon crime campaign. A letter from the police which includes links to videos and networking websites on the topic of knife crime awareness can be found on our website via the [following link](#) and you are strongly encouraged to talk this through with your children.

Again, apologies for the length of this letter but it's important to update you on such matters.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Take care

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rod Bell". The letters are connected and fluid, with a prominent 'R' and 'B'.

Rod Bell  
Headteacher