

9 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

September 2020 School Opening

Last week, the Department for Education published its guidance for schools on how to plan for all students to return to school in September 2020. The intention is that every student, in every year group, should return to school after the summer break. We will be ensuring that this will happen, as we know that whilst students (and their parents) have worked hard from home, it is no replacement for the face-to-face teaching we can offer in school. In addition to this, we also recognise the immense importance of our children and young people's wellbeing, for them to be amongst their friends and part of our school community again - with all the opportunities that it offers and, frankly, the pressure on families during this time has been enormous and that there is a sense of fatigue for us all.

When we open our doors again in September, there will need to be changes to our 'normal' way of operating. The Coronavirus remains prevalent, and no-one is immune to its effects. Therefore, as the school gets back into action, there will be multiple layers of controls and measures in place, in order to minimise the risks to both students and staff.

We cannot guarantee a completely risk-free environment, but I am sure that by the start of next term we will have all the appropriate systems in place, so that you can send your children into school with genuine confidence. We will be building upon the robust measures that have already been successfully in place at The Castle School with our partial opening to key workers' children, children with EHCPs, Year 10s and in the last week of term, Year 9s.

The Government's guidance is complex and there are some real challenges in meeting these requirements. Here is what we do know:

- A full return to school for all students is planned for September;
- Year 11s and Year 7s will return on Friday 4 September for an induction programme and extra support;
- Attendance will be statutory from September (**Monday 7 September**);
- We will continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum; we intend to offer all subjects including specialist practical subjects if we can;
- We will be working on a system of year group population 'bubbles', as a way to reduce contact;
- We will continue with our stringent cleaning and hygiene measures;
- Children should not attend school if they or anyone in their household has symptoms;
- It is our expectation that affected families will willingly participate with the NHS Test and Trace programme;
- A cold lunch will be available daily but will need to be ordered and collected (much the same as you might in a theatre at the interval);
- Students in secondary schools are expected to be able to socially distance at all times;
- All students will be sat side by side, front facing;
- School uniform will be worn as usual – there will be no requirement for this to be washed daily;

- Enrichment and extra-curricular activities will resume where possible, although we are not allowed overnight residential trips.

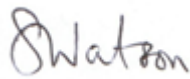
Finally, I know that some of you may be making plans for holidays abroad. I strongly encourage you to plan your return at least two weeks before school starts back to avoid any chance that you may have to isolate or if things change suddenly and you find yourselves in quarantine. Any chance that your child may have even mild symptoms will mean they cannot come back to school until he/she has tested negative, and any child who presents with even mild symptoms at school will be sent home. We are still in uncharted waters and I would urge everyone to err on the side of caution. This is so that we keep all our families and staff safe and well so that The Castle School remains open and with no year groups having to isolate.

I appreciate that you may still have some questions, however I would ask for your patience whilst we work through the guidance to create a rigorous opening plan. Please know that once I am in a position to, I will share more detail with you.

I would like thank all of you for the support that you have given to your children and our staff during these unprecedented times. I know that many parents have learned things they never knew during home-schooling, and that some students have really enjoyed sharing their knowledge with you.

We are very much looking forward to a full return and hopefully, some normality(!), as well as seeing all of our children in September.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mrs Watson".

Mrs Watson
Headteacher