

27th August, 2020

Dear Parent,

I hope you are all well and enjoying the final few days of the Summer break. I am looking forward to opening our doors again and welcoming back the Ballard Family. We have been working tirelessly over the Summer to make sure we are able to do this and I would like to thank publicly all the staff who have made this possible.

Please rest assured that we have taken every measure that we can to mitigate risk in School; the safety of the whole community is paramount in our plans. Whilst we can do a great deal to reduce risk whilst pupils are at Ballard, we cannot control behaviours outside the School. We therefore ask that all families follow the Government guidelines on gatherings and social distancing to protect the whole community and keep our School open for all.

At the time of writing, the guidelines state that you should only meet people you do not live within three types of groups:

- you can continue to meet in any outdoor space in a group of up to six people from different households
- single adult households – in other words adults who live alone or with dependent children only – can continue to form an exclusive ‘support bubble’ with one other household
- you can also meet in a group of two households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household), in any location – public or private, indoors or outdoors. This does not need to be the same household each time.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household-from-4-july>

Whilst in School, pupils will be expected to adhere to the new processes and procedures in place, in a mature and sensible manner. This will obviously be harder for our younger pupils and we will help and guide them as much as we can. I understand that some pupils may feel anxious about returning, several may have family members and loved ones who are unwell or vulnerable so this will be a particularly difficult time for them. Mr Marshall and the pastoral team will be on hand to help anyone who is struggling.

In a recent podcast, a headmaster in Denmark described the education they provided during this global pandemic as an “Emergency Education”. Whilst we are all looking forward to being back together some things will be different for a while longer. We are determined to provide all pupils with a breadth of education and deliver a full range of subjects, however some lessons may be delivered differently, and classes will be re-organised to enable year groups to “bubble” safely together. Whilst the R-value in Hampshire and Dorset is low we must guard against complacency. No one would have chosen to deliver an education in this manner, and although a great deal of work

went on last term and over the Summer to make sure we support our young people as much as we can, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are still in a global crisis.

I wrote to you all recently outlining our approach to returning to School safely, here are a few more details, so please read them carefully.

The focus of our planning for the safe return of all pupils to Ballard is based on the following principles:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend School.
- clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often throughout the day.
- minimise contact between year groups and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Symptoms

It is essential that parents follow the Government guidelines regarding COVID-19 to protect the health and welfare of the whole community.

If any member of staff or pupil displays any of the symptoms of coronavirus, or have tested positive for the virus in at least the last 10 days, they should not return to School. The main symptoms have been defined as follows:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Anyone developing these symptoms must self-isolate for 10 days, with household members self-isolating for 14 days. Similarly, if your child is not well for other reasons, they should also not return to School.

Please note that children and staff will have their temperature taken during their morning and afternoon registration. If a child's temperature reading is 37.8 degrees or above, Mrs Jacqui Besley, our School Nurse, will collect the child and determine whether he or she needs to be placed in our isolation room and collected by a parent.

Mrs Besley is putting together a COVID-19 procedure and this will be sent to you before the beginning of term.

The Government has stated that people returning to the UK from certain countries must self-isolate for 14 days when they return. If you and your family have returned from a country that is not exempt, please ensure that you do not send your children to School until after the 14-day isolation period has expired.

An example of when you would need to self-isolate:

You are in a country that is **not on the travel corridor list** (so upon return, you would need to self-isolate for 14 days). You then travel to a country that **is on the travel corridor list** and you stay there

for four days from the day after you arrive. **You then travel to England.** When you get to England, you will still need to self-isolate for 10 days, just not the usual 14 days. This is because by moving country, you have spent four of the 14 days of self-isolation in a country that is on the travel corridor list.

If you are unsure, please check the Government website for details.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors#countries-and-territories-with-no-self-isolation-requirement-on-arrival-in-england>

Cleaning

The whole School has undergone a deep clean over the Summer. There will be an enhanced cleaning regime in place when we all return. Toilets will be checked and cleaned regularly throughout the day. If specialist areas are to be used by more than one year group in a day, we will deep clean that area before the next year group arrives.

Year group “bubbles”

The main change for our pupils is that they will remain in year group “bubbles” and spend most of their time in their allocated area. These are as follows:

- Year 11 – Top floor of the Senior Block
- Year 10 – Ground floor of the Senior Block
- Year 9 – Music Block and P4 (the classroom next to the Dining Hall entrance)
- Year 8 – Top floor of the Main House
- Year 7 – Ground floor of the Main House
- Year 6 – 1st floor of Main House
- Years 3, 4 and 5 – one “bubble” in the Lower Prep area
- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 – one “bubble” in the Pre-Prep area
- Nursery and Kindergarten - one “bubble” in the Pre-Prep area

Pre-Prep and Lower Prep staff will deliver the majority of lessons for these sections. For Year 6 and above staff will move around the School between lessons and teach year groups in their year group bases. Our GCSE students will have priority access to our specialist teaching rooms to support them with their GCSE practical course work. Once we can see how everything is working in practice we will endeavour to extend the use of these specialist rooms to other year groups.

To protect our bubbles we have designated specific areas for individual year groups at break times:

- Year 11 – Cabin and grassy area around the Cabin
- Year 10 – Under the Senior Block Canopy and on the grassy area around the War Memorial
- Year 9 – Basketball Court, Outdoor classroom and the grassy area around it
- Year 8 – The canopy behind Main House and out onto the field, in front of the canopy.
- Year 7 – The Terrace
- Year 6 – Grassy area on the car park side of the Terrace and out on the field to the climbing frame.
- Years 3, 4 and 5 – morning break – Astro, lunchtime - Basketball Court, Outdoor classroom and the grassy area around it
- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 – Pre-Prep playground
- Nursery and Kindergarten - Pre Prep playground

Weather permitting, we will facilitate the use of the fields in designated areas and keep children within their “bubbles”.

Uniform

Following the Government’s advice, Ballard pupils will remain in full school uniform apart from their Games afternoon. On this day, pupils should arrive in their full Games kit and wear this during the day. This will affect the following year groups on the following days:

Year 3 - Tuesday

Year 4 - Tuesday

Year 5 – Monday and Wednesday

Year 6 – Monday and Wednesday

Year 7 – Wednesday

Year 8 – Wednesday

Year 9 – Tuesday

Year 10 – Thursday

Year 11 – Thursday

Pupils should bring trainers with them for all other PE lessons and any sports-based after-school activities. Pre-Prep children will bring their PE kit as normal and leave it at School all week.

Please note that we are unable to open our uniform shops due to their size and location. You may purchase new uniform online and we hope to offer an appointment system for second-hand uniform collection. More details can be found on our website.

Face coverings

We will limit the movement around the School as much as we can, but there will be some movement and we are asking all staff and pupils in Year 7 and above to wear face coverings whilst in corridors and communal areas. Children using “single use” masks will need to dispose of them in a covered bin safely after use and carry a number of these on them. Those with cloth masks will need to store them in their blazer pockets in a small plastic bag. Pupils using cloth masks should wash them after School if they have been used, or rotate a number of masks, with the spares kept at home. We would encourage any child in Year 6 and below to wear a face covering if they are comfortable and able to do so whilst moving around the School. Masks are not recommended for children in Pre-Prep as the guidance states that they not required for children under 11 years of age but definitely not under the age of 3, owing to health and safety issues.

The advice is that face coverings are not necessary at all times, but if any member of the community wishes to wear a face covering or other PPE in the classroom we will support that decision.

Minibuses

Minibuses will run as usual. We will expect pupils in Year 7 and above to wear a face covering, and we would suggest that any child in Year 6 and below who is able to, wears a face covering too. If Government advice changes on this I will write again to let you how any changes may affect your

child. We will open as many of the minibus windows as we can to improve ventilation, and pupils entering the minibus will be expected to use the hand sanitiser provided. We would also expect children on the bus to face forwards at all times and try, as much as possible, to sit with members of their year group only.

Lunch

We have looked at ways that we can provide the best lunches we can in as safe a way as possible. Year groups will access their lunches in their “bubbles” and times will be staggered where possible. We will provide a mixture of hot lunches in the dining room, and packed lunches delivered to classrooms on a rota. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide a salad bar at this time, although please note that Mr Whiting has created a new high quality packed lunch menu with a wide variety of choices for pupils.

Activities

We are not able to offer our usual programme of section and ‘cross year group’ activities in the short term. Staff are working hard to create a programme that will enable each year group bubble to have access to a variety of enrichment opportunities across the week. We aim to have this programme ready to begin on Monday 14th September and pupils will be able to sign up to these activities in the first week of term. Up until Friday 11th September, pupils staying in School until 5.00pm will be catered for in Prep or an informal Games room, with some Sport and Performing Arts also offered to each year group at some point during the week.

Peripatetic music and speech and drama lessons

We are currently in the process of making arrangements to facilitate peripatetic music and speech and drama lessons. At first these are likely to be delivered through a mixture of live, socially distanced lessons and remote lessons via Teams. If you already have lessons, or have submitted a form to start lessons this term, Mrs Gray will be in touch with you at the start of term with more details.

Games and PE

During Games and PE lessons pupils will be taught in their “bubbles”. For their PE lessons (outside of their Games afternoon) pupils will wear trainers whilst remaining in their uniforms (girls may wear a skirt). Socks, a gumshield and shin pads should be brought in for hockey but remain in their year group bases as the locker rooms and changing rooms are out of bounds. Pre-Prep children will be able to safely change in their classrooms, as normal.

For Games, unfortunately we are unable to facilitate fixtures until at least half-term.

Year 3 to Year 6 will have a variety of mixed games, when girls and boys will have a chance to play in mixed teams at football, netball, tag-rugby and hockey.

Year 7 to Year 8 will focus on their own sports for the season of football for boys and hockey for girls. There will also be some fun mixed events for netball, basketball and volleyball.

Year 9 to Year 11 will follow a similar programme but with emphasis of mixed hockey in activity times. The main focus will be to get ready for any future fixtures.

Visitors to the School

We are keeping visitors to the School to an absolute minimum to reduce the risk to our pupils and staff. Only parents with pre-arranged appointments will be allowed into any building. Anyone arriving at the School will need to report to Main Reception where personal details will be recorded and their temperature taken.

School start and finish times

Start and finish times will remain the same. It will be far harder for us to look after children who arrive early and keep children safe in their “bubbles”. We are asking parents to do their best to time their children’s arrival, if dropping off by car, as close to 8.30am as possible. If you need your child to arrive before this time, please contact the relevant Head of Section (Mrs Guillen, Mr Blake, Mr Ridley, Mrs Hunt) to let them know and they will be able to make arrangements. Please note that Early Club will be happening for Pre-Prep.

Parking and drop off

We are currently reviewing parking drop areas and procedures and we will write to you early next week to update you on our plans.

Return to Ballard

The first day of term for the pupils is Thursday 3rd September. We are asking pupils who were here last year to arrive at 8.30am and make their way to their new form room. Heads of Section will be writing to you in the next few days to let you know which form group will be in which classroom. Members of the Leadership Team and Senior Management Team will be on hand in the car parks and around the School to direct pupils to their correct rooms. We are asking new pupils to arrive at 8.45am. Heads of Section will write with arrangements for new pupils and buddies.

There is a great deal to digest in this letter, and once we are back I am sure some of our procedures and processes will be evaluated and amended, but rest assured a huge amount of work has gone into preparing for a full reopening and having spent much of the Summer on this, I am looking forward to seeing our wonderful community back at Ballard, where they belong.

With best wishes,

Andrew McCleave
Headmaster