



# DARRICK WOOD SCHOOL

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RESPECT | RESPONSIBILITY | HONESTY

Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

COVID-19 remains very much something that continues to dominate life for us all, but I am delighted to be writing to you at the start of a new term where there seems to be an opportunity for a return to something nearer to normal school life and we can feel cautiously optimistic about the year ahead.

We have a phased return to facilitate asymptomatic COVID-19 tests in school and there have been a very small number of positive test results from these. There will be less disruption as a result however as those who are under 18 (or adults who are double vaccinated) no longer need to isolate if they are identified as contacts of positive cases. Only the positive case needs to isolate. On Tuesday next week all year groups will have started their lessons and I plan to visit as many lessons as I can. I am looking forward to speaking to students and staff about teaching and learning and our ambitions for this year.

We have had a tremendous turnout for the tests today. The students were very patient and our test site staff worked very hard under pressure all day. We have contacted parents/carers of Year 8 about the schedule for tests on Monday, which is altered slightly to reduce the waiting time.

I set out below some news and reminders that I hope you will find helpful. Please do read these notices carefully to ensure your child is well supported in school.

## **Symptoms of COVID-19**

Your child should not attend school if they experience any of the three main symptoms of COVID-19. Please arrange for them to take a PCR test and isolate until the result is known.

## **Asymptomatic testing at home**

Once students have had their on-site tests, they are encouraged to return to taking LFD tests at home twice weekly. Whilst we are aware this is an undertaking most would rather not have to do, it is a key strategy for keeping the virus out of schools at a time when many of the restrictions have been removed by the government. We are grateful for your support with this. We have a good supply of these at school and your child's Form Tutor can provide more when your child runs out.

## **School Development Plan 2021-24**

We have decided to strengthen what we do as a school through a focus on three areas selected from our overall goals, values and vision for learning. We will focus on Curriculum, Responsibility and Engagement. More specifically we will:

- 1) Make changes to our curriculum and enhance our extra-curricular provision to ensure these equip students to become successful global citizens.
- 2) Use the latest evidence to inform teaching that will engage and include more students more of the time who then achieve highly.
- 3) Improve and look after the environment better, enabling students to develop knowledge and skills needed to become responsible global citizens.

These are quite wordy, so for the Twitter generation we might summarise these as follows:

*We will develop and teach a more inclusive and engaging curriculum. We will become more responsible for the local and global environment.*

We are ambitious about what we want to achieve. It will mean engaging all in our school community with our plans - students, parents/carers, governors and staff, the wider community. At key points in the year, we will ask for parent/carer input or support regarding our plans. For example, for the focus on the environment we need your help to change the culture that has developed over time where students bring or buy single-use plastic bottles of mineral water. From the start of this term, we will not sell these at school anymore. **All students should bring with them a reusable bottle.** Metal is ideal, but not glass. These can be refilled around school and we are investigating options for further bottle filling stations, potentially for filtered water.

We also have plans to begin developing a spare piece of land in school into a garden. Our Senior Prefects have worked hard in consultation with other students and staff to prepare a design. We may need your help with tools and seeds etc at some point later this year.

With objective 1 we want to ensure that what we teach engages all students in learning and really does equip them for future life. No doubt parents will have ideas for improvements that we could make. Again, when the time is right, we will contact you or groups of parents to ensure our decisions are the right ones.

### **Staff changes and communication with school**

Turnover of staff at Darrick Wood is relatively low – people like working here! We did say a sad goodbye and good luck to a small number of staff at the end of the last academic year and have a number of maternity covers annually, but we are very fortunate to be welcoming some excellent new staff this September. There have also been some new appointments to the Senior Leadership Team to cover for a maternity and enhance the support we can provide the School as we transition through the pandemic.

Parents will generally communicate with Form Tutors, Achievement Coordinators and Assistant Coordinators before needing to contact an Assistant Head Teacher or a Deputy Head Teacher. Similarly, on the academic side, subject teachers before Heads of Department or Faculty and then only if necessary, will a member of the SLT be involved.

All our Assistant Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers have specific pastoral and academic leadership responsibilities. The Senior Leadership Team for 2021/22 is as follows:

#### Deputy Head Teachers

Ms C Wilson-Hooper (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Mr J Eynon

#### Assistant Head Teachers

Mrs V Hodgson (SENCO), Mrs R Honeysett (Deputy Safeguarding Lead), Mrs L Keaney, Mr B Aylwin, Mrs L Enstone, Mr M Smith, Dr L Burroughs

New appointments to the SLT for 2021/22 are Mrs Hodgson, Mrs Keaney and Mr Aylwin. Their names will be familiar to many of you already from their previous positions in the School. Whilst Mrs Hodgson is now an Assistant Head Teacher, she continues to be our SENCO.

### **Parent meetings at the School**

We would be grateful if parents/carers continue to follow our policy of requiring pre-arranged appointments before attending the site. This is an additional control measure for COVID-19, ensuring for example that a suitable venue can be found for a meeting, but also because as a large, busy school where staff continue to work after normal school hours, it is not reasonable to expect them to change their planned activities for an unplanned meeting. Without an appointment the person most able to help will not be available.

### **Parents' evenings**

Parents' evenings this year will again be held virtually using the SchoolCloud system. We received very positive feedback on this from parents and staff last year. Whilst we may miss the face-to-face meetings of old, we will not miss the queuing, the noise and the lack of parking. You will be contacted by email regarding any SchoolCloud meeting you need to attend with instructions on how to set this up.

## Move from Class Charts to Bromcom

We are no longer using Class Charts to record positive or negative House Points. From this term, please download the Bromcom MyChildAtSchool app instead if you do not already have this. This will allow you to track the points your child receives, see a copy of their timetable, their attendance etc. We will send out further information on the MyChildAtSchool (MCAS) app next week.

## Times of the School Day

School starts for all year groups at 8.35am. Please ensure your child is on site before this time with the correct uniform/PE kit/Sixth Form dress, equipment and ID card. School finishes for all year groups at 3pm. Students will be allowed to wait for siblings and friends in the Year 11 playground (by the flagpole). They should not gather outside the gates. All students are expected to go straight home and not delay in the surrounding area.

## Dates for the diary

We will write separately to relevant parents/carers regarding events such as the Meet the Tutor and Information Evening.

10<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Year 12 Team Building Day

15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Year 12 Meet the Tutor (SchoolCloud)

15<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Year 7 Team Building Day

17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Year 13 Team Building Day

21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 – Year 13 Meet the Tutor (SchoolCloud)

29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Year 11 Information Evening – currently planned to be in school

1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 – Y7, Y9 and Y12 School Photos

4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 – PSFA AGM (7pm)

I look forward to sharing further news and information about the School with you in the Parent Bulletin through the year ahead. In the meantime, I wish you and your families an enjoyable weekend.

Yours sincerely

Dr M J Airey

Head Teacher