

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### School Update

I am delighted to see all of our students and staff back in our school. As I have said before, whilst we have a modern school building and facilities, it is not the building, equipment and the grounds that make a school; it is the students and the staff with parents, carers and governors supporting in the background that shape a school and the ethos and culture of a school. It is wonderful to be in full operation again as we come to the end of the first week back for students.

I am grateful to the small number of parents who have raised concerns with us about our full opening of the school because it has given us a chance to respond to them. Some of the parents concerned have been kind enough to send in an email of thanks after they have received my reply which has led me to reflect that perhaps I should share with all families a little more detail about how we are currently operating as a school:

We have arranged different entry and exit points to the building for each year group for the start and end of the school day and for morning break and lunchtime;

We have staggered morning break and lunchtime for different clusters of year groups;

Each year group has their own designated area for break and lunchtime, both outside (fair weather) and inside (wet weather);

We have placed each year group in their own teaching zone so for example Year 7 are based in our maths wing. A student in Year 7 studying history will do so in the maths room and the history teacher comes to them. This is a pity because each of our classrooms is decorated with material relating to the subject that was being delivered in that room before lockdown. Previously, students would move around the school and go to the specialist room for the subject and so could find themselves in a history room with a life size cut out of Putin, propaganda T-shirts from both sides in the last US election, flags from around the world and memorabilia from key historical events. In our current way of working the history lessons for a Year 7 student takes place in a room decorated with mathematical material.

By placing our students in year group zones of no more than 240 we are compliant with the guidance issued by the Department for Education. There is no requirement for secondary schools to keep students in the same class all day, but they are expected to be kept in year group 'bubbles' of 240. There are classes that remain the same across some subjects within the bubble. For example, in Year 7 the class consists of the same students for English, Geography, History and RE and in Year 9 the class is the same for Geography, History and RE. We are following public health guidelines by operating in this way as the students are always kept within their bubble. Cleaning rooms between their use by different year groups during the day is essential in rooms such as laboratories and workshops and that cleaning is built into our daily routine. Classrooms that are used by the same year group or bubble all day are cleaned at the end of the school day.

Each practical subject area has established its own cleaning protocol. For example, in IT lessons the students are asked to use the wall mounted hand sanitiser on the way into the lesson. Towards the end of the lesson they are asked to wipe down the key board and the mouse with an alcohol wipe and to use the hand sanitiser on the way out.

As for social distancing in secondary schools, this is simply not possible as students will be sitting next to each other in every classroom in every school. The Government's Department for Education changed its position on social distancing in schools many weeks ago when it finally dawned on them that it was not possible unless they could provide extra buildings, budgets and staff. To halve a class, we would need twice as many teachers and classroom assistants and the budget to pay for them along with twice as many classrooms than we currently have in schools. In fact, the Department for Education went further than simply change their position as they put out a blog some weeks ago claiming that they had never advocated social distancing in schools and it was the fault of schools and school leaders for 'over interpreting' the guidance.

Staff are monitoring behaviour in between lessons and other changeover points and are instructed to ensure that our students use the exit assigned to them for their departure at the end of the school day. I do not wish to cause undue concern when I say that whilst we are operating as best we can in a year group bubble, there may be the odd occasion when students from one year group briefly passes another. This brief passing is not in itself inherently harmful.

Once the students leave the building we know that they are not keeping within their bubbles or observing social distance across year group bubbles and I have not seen a shop, café, restaurant, bus or train attempt to operate year group bubbles. Students of all ages are in shops and other premises at the same time and in many cases live in the same household; however, whilst they are in school we will strive at all times to maintain our year group bubbles.

Each week we analyse the Covid-19 cases in Crawley and use our local intelligence about our school community. At this point in time, both make for very good reading at present, but please be assured we are not being complacent about Coronavirus. We are doing our best to mitigate against the risk. We cannot eliminate the risk altogether, but we are striving to reduce it as much as is possible, whilst providing our students with some sense of normality in these most unusual times and our measures are under constant review.

I hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and well.

With my best wishes to you and your family

**Philip Stack**  
**Headteacher**