

July 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your support during the period of lockdown and say how much myself and my team are looking forward to seeing all current students return to us in September, along with the new year 7 and other new students joining the school.

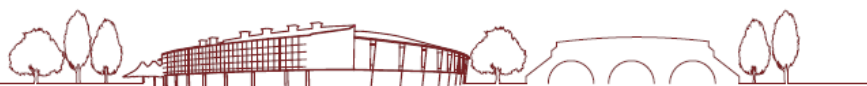
As you are aware the government have recently published guidance for schools on reopening. As a result, I have worked together with senior staff and governors to agree a plan which is set out below. I am sure you will understand that if there is any revised guidance then plans may change.

I have been really impressed with the way students and staff have adapted to working remotely and would like to thank parents and carers for your support of our young people. I would also like to commend those students who have joined us in school over lockdown both in the keyworker area and in the face-to-face lessons, they have been an absolute pleasure to work with. I remember the first day of year 10 and 12 returning when they were very generous in their conversations with us, checking we were fine when we were more worried about them! Our values of respect, effort, attitude and perseverance (REAP), have shone through.

In addition, there have been so many good and great things which have occurred during lockdown which we must celebrate. Our July school newsletter will include lots of positive stories about students, all youngsters should be very proud of any positive contribution they have made to their families and the community.

I must also say at this point how proud I am of our staff team who have delivered remote teaching and support for the first time in their professional careers, many of them doing this alongside home schooling their own children. We have all been learning and your feedback to us during lockdown has been invaluable in terms of our planning (the recent parent survey which was very positive will also be very helpful to us, thank you to those of you who responded and commented). In addition, 34 chapters of Treasure Island have been filmed by colleagues and shared with all students and year 6; over 500 face shields have been made by the design team for a variety of organisations including care homes and hospitals. Other colleagues designed and produced scrub bags and face masks in their own time, approximately 150 of the former and 100 of the latter. Staff and governors came together as a team and collected items for the Blandford Foodbank as well as raising £756 for the same cause; we are also part of their 'holiday hunger' programme which is helping families with food parcels over the summer.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about the support we have had as a school from the local community. Williams Williams, Blandford Rotary and the Blandford Forum Almshouse Charity have donated £14k for the purchase of student laptops and I am enormously grateful to them for this; the Town Council have also supported us with our plans for reopening, their offer of help was very much appreciated. Bryanston School has been magnificent by supporting us with



laptops in the early part of lockdown; providing more first aiders so we were able to open safely for the children of key workers and even supplying Easter eggs for the same children!

The Full Governing Board chaired by Mr Mario Roncaglia have been extremely proactive during lockdown. Meetings have continued virtually and there have been 14 (socially distanced/virtual) visits to the school by the Board to meet students and staff and check how things are going. I am very grateful to them for their contribution.

Plans for September

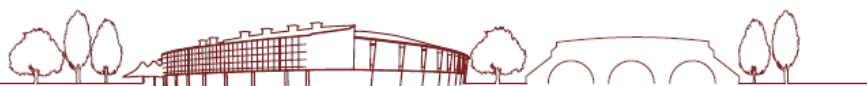
In order to ensure we open safely for all students we felt it important to have 48 hours with staff who have not worked together, face to face, since March. As a result, **Dorset Council have granted us an exceptional training day on 4 September 2020**, all other dates in our school calendar remain the same.

Thursday 3 September	Staff Training Day
Friday 4 September	Staff Training Day
Monday 7 September	Year 7 and 12 welcomed back to school
Tuesday 8 September	All students welcomed back to school

Colleagues are working very hard to plan for the return of your children and make it as smooth as possible. Alongside setting and marking work remotely, staff have been working tirelessly to ensure the curriculum for September builds on knowledge and understanding and provides a sustained response to students' needs. It is important that we both support students as they re-connect with their teachers and their subjects and challenge them in their progress, and subjects have focussed on this in their planning.

We are also very conscious some students may not have found lockdown easy and may be feeling anxious about joining us/returning to TBS after a period of absence from formal schooling. We have a very strong support system including mentors, our student support worker, tutors, heads of year and external agencies. The well-being of students will continue to be central to our work.

An extensive risk assessment has been completed to support the reopening of the school. Our reopening plans described in this letter will be reviewed constantly with the first formal review just before October half term. If there are any changes, I will communicate these with you then. Parents are asked to take opportunities, over the holiday, to prepare students for the return to the 'outside world' and to school.



Minimising contact ('Bubbles')

- In order to minimise contact and mixing, each year group will be a 'bubble'. Year 12 and 13 will be one bubble.
- Each day, on arrival, year 7 – 11 students will go straight to an external area of the school to join their year group (year 12 and 13 students may go direct to the sixth form area/their classrooms).

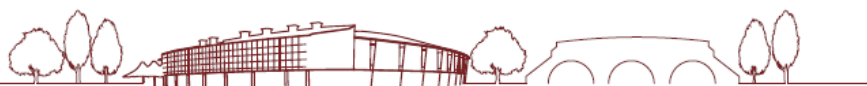
Heads of Year will greet students in these areas (which will be shared on welcome videos currently being prepared – see the end of this letter) and the children will then be collected by tutors to go to tutor time. At each lesson changeover, year 7 – 11 students will return to the external area to be collected by their teachers, the same area will be used for break and lunch. I am afraid, for the moment, no ball games will be allowed.

Attendance, Equipment and Uniform

- Students will be expected to fully attend school and be punctual on arrival.
- Please ensure your child has the right equipment for school as we need to avoid sharing such items. Support is available for pupil premium students, please email Mr Dan Johnson on djohnson@blandfordschool.org.uk if you need assistance. Students will need the equipment *which is attached* and has been updated since information was provided for parents of new students to the school. Our old equipment list (for example) shows headphones as optional but as a result of C19, I would like to ask all students to pop some headphones in their bags to use in IT lessons as we will no longer be able to share equipment. In addition, please could I ask you to include a dry wipe pen, glue stick and safety scissors in your child's pencil case. Apologies for these additions.
- Uniform - all students are asked to be in line with our uniform policy.
- An important update regarding uniform for September relates to PE and GCSE Dance lessons as our changing rooms will need to be out of action. Students are asked to come into school in kit only on days they have these two subjects (they will not need to change into proper uniform at all on these days). Students are asked to wear plain black tracksuit bottoms or leggings (parents will have 6 weeks to meet this requirement). I am sorry about this temporary change to our policy. They may have shorts or a skort underneath to wear for the actual lesson. It is also recommended for students to bring a TBS PE sweatshirt or fleece in the event of colder weather as the majority of PE lessons will be outside.
- Students are advised to wear an unseen layer under their uniform if it is cold and wear a coat to school as students will be meeting outside.

The School Day/Travel

- We will be encouraging, as far as possible in a school context, that students try to socially distance.
- All students are asked **not to arrive at school until 08.20am** (unless they are on buses) as for the reasons outlined below, we will unfortunately not be able to welcome students safely onto site until this time. This is a change from our previous policy and I respectfully ask parents comply with this request. All children must be in school by 08.40am



- Although school buses will be operating, where there is an alternative means of transport, students should avoid using the school buses or public transport. For dedicated bus routes, face coverings are not mandatory but are strongly recommended. For service routes, they are compulsory. On arrival at school their face mask must be put into a plastic bag and stored in their school bag, students are then asked to sanitise their hands (see below *).
- From September, parents are asked to drop students off-site and as a last resort use the leisure centre car park. Please be aware there will be no vehicular access via the Milldown gate before 09.00 and after 15.15pm in order to ensure the safety of children attending The Milldown School and Panda Pre-School. Parents are asked not to drive down to our reception area at the start and end of days, or drop students off on our internal roadway adjacent to Blocks One and Three as this must be kept free for bus drop offs.
- Parents of any children with recognised mobility issues are asked to contact the SENDCo as special arrangements will be made for you.
- Students are invited to walk or cycle to school. Children are asked not to cycle through the main gates by Milldown Road, they must walk onto site.
- As year 7 students/ new students arrive (either by the leisure centre entrance or the Milldown gate (walkers/cyclists only), we will be ready to welcome them and escort them to the appropriate area (year 7 will be gathering on the terrace behind Block 5 overlooking the rugby fields).
- Students are advised to not overload their bags, they just need to make sure they have the right equipment and books. Lockers will be able to be accessed during breaks and lunches.

Catering and drinks during the day

- The caterers will be providing a 'grab and go' service at breaks and lunches to avoid overcrowding in The Hub. Students may of course bring in a packed lunch if they prefer. Meals will be available for any students in receipt of free school meals.
- Students are asked to bring in an adequate sized water bottle as the water fountains will be out of action.
- Payments for food should all be via ParentPay to avoid the use of cash in the autumn. New students will be given a card on arrival, and existing students should use their card issued for photocopying. If you require activation details, please email the office over the summer (see details later in this letter).

Safety

- There will continue to be an enhanced cleaning regime in school with extra cleaning being carried out during the course of the day.
- Students are asked to bring in some sanitising hand gel* (in a small quantity) and adequate tissues. I appreciate this is expensive but if you are able to assist us then it would be really helpful to our community. For information, we have installed some sanitising units across the school (for example, in IT rooms), but we are unable to resource the whole school with these units. Students will be asked to wash their hands regularly during the day if parent/carers could ask students to wash their hands before leaving home as well, this would be very helpful.



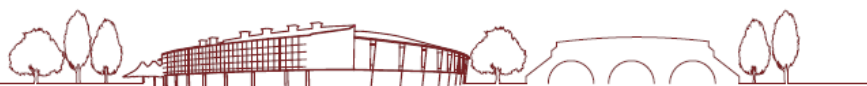
- Windows and doors will be open to ensure adequate ventilation.
- There will be some one-way systems which we ask students to observe.
- Desks will face forward in the majority of classrooms. Some subjects are being re-roomed in order for students to have the best possible experience. An example of this is music where some lessons will be taught in the hall and some outside.
- The use of equipment and resources will be in line with government guidance. Subjects this particularly relates to include PE, music, design, art, science.
- There will be no large indoor gatherings. Assemblies will be conducted outdoors if possible and if not, virtually into tutor rooms.

Curricular and Extra- Curricular

- Extra-curricular provision is suspended for the first half term (to be reviewed in October) and planned school activities/trips are being reviewed. I am exceptionally sorry we have had to take this decision and very much hope we are able to start clubs up as soon as possible as we know how much students enjoy them.
- The library will be closed for the first half term, in the first instance. Again, I am exceptionally sorry about this. We are going to try and arrange a system of book lending to support the literacy of our students. I would like the Sixth Form to know we are setting up The Well with more study tables (as it will not be used for assemblies). If the sixth form have any questions they are welcome to email heads of year directly.
- There will be no peripatetic music lessons in the first half term, again this will be reviewed.

Behaviour

- Our behaviour policy is being adapted for September. The crucial change is that if students mis-behave then a formal warning will be issued by the teacher. If they ignore this warning and continue to mis-behave the teacher will remove them, they will be spoken to by the senior leadership team and placed back into class (in the past they have been moved to a different classroom within the subject area but we are unable to do this in September due to our 'bubbles'), they will receive an immediate detention on the day (if periods 1 – 4) or the following day if period 5. If they mis-behave again then they will be completely removed and isolated for one day. After school detentions will be arranged as necessary and parents are asked to fully support these.
- Students whose poor behaviour is persistent or who do not comply with our detention arrangements will be excluded from school for a period as the new arrangements as outlined in this letter will not allow us some of the flexibilities we had in the past. I would urge all parents to talk to your children about the necessity of being 'in line' with our rules and following reasonable instructions in what are challenging times.
- Our mobile phone policy remains the same in September so no mobile phones should be used past the gates on the main roadway. Phones and headphones should be placed in bags at all times with phones switched off.



Covid 19

- Face masks may be worn if wished by students and staff. Government guidance at the time of writing is they are not required in schools, obviously if this changes and they become mandatory we will be asking all students and staff to comply.
- Any individual experiencing COVID 19 symptoms, or anyone in their household, should not attend school until they have completed their quarantine period. Government guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Contact over the summer

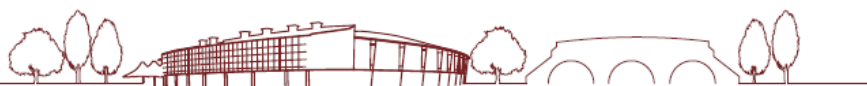
- If you know the colleague you wish to contact then use the normal email address/telephone numbers you may have. Please contact the relevant Head of Faculty for academic matters in the first instance and the Head of Year if your query is of a pastoral nature. Our office email will be monitored over the summer holiday so you are also welcome to contact us. The address is office@blandfordschool.org.uk. New parents/carers are welcome to email the head of year of their year group in the first instance, they will be checking their emails once a week so please be aware that a response may not be immediate. Please also note that our administration team will also be taking some holidays whilst the school is closed. We will respond to all emails as quickly as possible, but this may take longer than during term-time.
- Please be aware we are currently preparing some videos to send to students before the start of term (on Teams). I don't think they will win any Bafta's but they will welcome all youngsters, remind them of expectations and help to reassure any children who are feeling at all anxious about any aspect of school life.

Visiting/contacting the school

- I am afraid I will need to ask you to make an appointment if you wish to visit the school from September, this is simply so we can manage interactions on site. If you wish to call reception and make contact then our school number is 01258 451121, there is an answer phone in out of office hours. Office hours are 08.30 – 17.00.
- We use email a lot for communicating. For all parents, your first point of contact if you have any concerns is your child's tutor. Tutors' individual email addresses will be provided for you before the summer holiday by the guidance and welfare team.
- Other important contacts are heads of year, heads of faculty (for subject related matters) and the SENDCo who, with her team, will be heavily engaged in supporting children on entry.
- Our office email is monitored regularly and is office@blandfordschool.org.uk. If you wish to call reception and make contact then our school number is 01258 451121.

Future matters

- Evening events such as Meet the Tutor Evening (for year 7 parents), Open Evening (for year 6 parents) and Parents' Evenings will be reviewed over the summer so we find a safe way of managing these essential contacts with parents and carers.



MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGE FOR ALL

The Blandford School Tel: 01258 451121
Milldown Road Fax: 01258 454755
Blandford Forum Email: office@blandfordschool.org.uk
Dorset, DT11 7SQ Web: www.blandfordschool.org.uk


**THE BLANDFORD
SCHOOL**

Finally, I would like to thank you for the supportive messages myself and the team have received over recent months. I have been writing a briefing note to staff each day and many of your messages have found their way onto these, it is always good to share the positives!

The entire TBS staff very much look forward to welcoming our young people back to school in September; to hear their chatter and laughter will be a delight! I promise you we will do everything we can to welcome students back positively and return to face-to-face learning with vigour.

I look forward to working with you in the coming months, have a restful summer.

Yours sincerely



Sally Wilson
Headteacher

Enc. Equipment List

