

28th August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As the new academic year approaches we hope that you are looking forward to the return to some normality and routine but we also fully understand that you may have some anxieties regarding your child returning to school. This letter should hopefully answer many of your questions but as a result is quite long. Please take the time to read all of the information in this letter and be assured we will reiterate all of the messages to your child on the first day of school.

The health and safety of all students and staff is paramount to us and we have a full and rigorous risk assessment in place which has been approved by the Laurus Trust Governors and Trustees and adheres fully to the current government guidance. Obviously, this will be revisited regularly and will be refined and adapted along with any new advice we receive. At Didsbury High School we are lucky to have only two year groups to accommodate. This allows us to have separate year group 'bubbles', whilst retaining a broad and balanced curriculum. Each year group will have their own toilets to use, as well as their own outdoor space. A one way system has been introduced to enable the smooth flow of students around the school during lesson changeovers.

Hand Washing/ Cleaning

As the students enter each class they must use the hand sanitizer provided. There are additional dispensers of hand sanitizer situated around the school building.

Additional lidded bins have been provided in school for use by all to ensure we 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it'.

Increased frequency in terms of the cleaning of communal areas / high contact points will take place – toilets, door handles, IT equipment and white boards.

Uniform

The full school uniform is expected to be worn with the addition of a plain coloured face mask in keeping with the rest of the school uniform. Students are expected to wear face coverings on corridors and in mixed 'bubble' communal areas. Face coverings will not be worn in the classroom.

Students need to bring their own face covering to school for this purpose.

Attendance

The government have set the expectation that all children will return to school in the autumn term. We have attached a Coronavirus-related Absence Guide to assist you over the coming weeks should your child or a member of your household start to show symptoms of coronavirus. Current guidance states that students who have been identified as extremely clinically vulnerable can attend school from September.

In order to keep our school community safe, we ask that if someone in your household shows symptoms of Covid-19 then please inform us at the earliest opportunity via enquiries@didsburyhighschool.org.uk

Please do not send your child into school if anyone in your household is showing signs of Covid-19.

Dining

Our dining hall will be open and Aspens, our caterers, will be offering hot food on a daily basis. We have installed a Perspex screen in our Dining Room. Half of the Dining Room will be for Year 8 students and half for Year 7 students.

We request that parents and carers please transfer money on to their ParentPay account before September 3rd. We will be issuing all students with an individual contactless card to be used in the dining hall to replace the fingerprint biometric operation.

Electives

To reduce visitors to our site and to allow for the necessary increase in cleaning all electives are suspended for the first half term. This will mean that students will be leaving school at 3.45pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 1.45pm on Wednesdays.

Travel

We strongly encourage all students to walk or cycle to school in order to minimise the number of people entering the school site. If your child cycles to school, they **must** wear a helmet and use a bicycle lock.

If your child has to use public transport they must wear a face covering, as per government guidelines, unless they have an exemption card.

Please note parents/carers will only be allowed on the school site by appointment and will be expected to wear a face covering. If you wish to speak to someone at school we request that you do so via email (enquiries@didsburyhighschool.org.uk) or telephone (0161 507 5600).

Behaviour

The normal behaviour policy will obviously still apply, as will additional rules regarding Covid-19 safety and social distancing.

Equipment

Students must bring all of their own equipment to school. They need to have their own pencil case containing basic equipment such as pens, pencils, ruler, rubber, sharpener etc. Students should not share their equipment with other students. We will be unable to lend out any basic equipment, so it is more important than ever for students to bring with them all of the equipment that they will require for the school day.

Back to school

We are very much looking forward to greeting all our students on Thursday 3rd September.

Year 7 are to arrive between 8am – 8.20am

Year 8 are to arrive between 9am – 9.30am

From Friday 4th September onwards students can arrive from 7.30am. They will need to be at school by 8.20am.

We will fully inform students about the new systems and procedures in place on Thursday 3rd September and to remind them of our expectations. Students will spend the morning with their tutors, including an assembly and a tour of the school. In the afternoon timetabled lessons will begin.

We recognise that Covid-19 has affected families in different ways. If you have any specific concerns and you would like us to know so we can support your child, please get in touch. This can be via a phone call in September or an email when convenient. Thank you to those parents who have already done so. We will not discuss this with your child unless this is your/their wish and we will not share any information beyond the people you specify (generally Tutors and Head of Year). Support can be put in place when needed, both from key staff including our Heads of Year/School Counsellor. Some tutor time activities and lessons will address aspects of Covid-19 when we look at Resilience and Mental Wellbeing when back in school.

You will most likely be aware of the disproportionate effect of Covid-19 on individuals of a BAME background. Evidence from the Office for National Statistics shows a greater impact of Covid-19 on Black communities. If you have any specific concerns please contact us to discuss in September.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you again for all your support throughout this unprecedented time. We are very much looking forward to welcoming our students to school and back to lessons.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Woolley', written in a cursive style.

Dr David Woolley

Head of School