

7th July 2020

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Headteacher: Mr P.J Bowers MAEd

Dear Parent/Carer

Firstly, I would like to welcome you as new members of our Year 7 parent community. I am so disappointed that I will not be able to meet you all at our usual induction events. I am of course fully aware as both a parent and a Headteacher of how difficult transition to a new school can be for many children, and we are all extremely conscious of the worries and concerns you may be having during these extraordinary times.

I feel I can confidently reassure you that once they arrive, your child will be in incredibly safe hands! Our care and support for our new pupils improves year on year, and whilst your child has missed a number of the established opportunities to support them during the summer term, we will adjust our provision in the autumn term to ensure they settle quickly and successfully.

Mrs Davison in particular is dedicating so much of her time (and emotional energy!) into providing as much information as possible to support you and your child during this transition period. I am aware most of you have had an opportunity to tour the school in small groups, and there is now a welcome video on our website to inform/remind you of how the school looks! As ever, she is available to address any particular concerns you may have before we break for the summer holidays. Please contact her on md@codsall-middle.staffs.sch.uk if you have any worries that need addressing before the end of next week.

I am fully aware that many of the organisational issues for September have been dealt with by Mrs Davison in her communications with you to date. I am writing to outline for you the particular steps we will be taking as a school to address our full re-opening in September. The following is a copy of the information I have shared with our current school community.

In summary, it has been decided that all pupils should return to school at the start of the new academic year. I will be delighted to welcome our new pupils in particular, and of course to have a full school again after so long. However, there is much for us as a school community to digest and action before we break for the summer holidays. As I am sure you will appreciate, there are many Health and Safety procedures we will need to adhere to and these are summarised as follows:

- *a requirement that people who are ill stay at home*
- *robust hand and respiratory hygiene*
- *enhanced cleaning arrangements*
- *active engagement with NHS Test and Trace*
- *formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable*



How contacts are reduced **will depend on the school's circumstances** and will (as much as possible) include:

- *grouping children together*
- *avoiding contact between groups*
- *arranging classrooms with forward facing desks*
- *staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible*

Please be reassured that a thorough review and adaptation of our current detailed Risk Assessment will be undertaken, and necessary changes made, to ensure we follow the Government guidance before we re-open in September. Many of the considerations are already in place during our current opening.

We will be making a number of operational changes to our routines and procedures. As well as internal changes to the layout of classrooms and corridors, pupils will also be organised into year group “bubbles”, to limit their interaction with children from other years. To facilitate this, we will introduce staggered start and finish times, as well as staggered breaks and lunchtimes. However, there is explicit recognition that social distancing as we have come to expect in the community cannot be implemented in a school such as ours, and that flexibility will be required to ensure all pupils can return.

In the absence of specific Middle School guidance, we will implement the advice for secondary schools as closely as possible. You are of course aware we are designated as a “Middle, deemed Secondary, school” and our structures and routines follow those of a secondary school.

We are expected to do “...everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.” In doing so, there will inevitably be some interaction between pupils and staff. This is recognised in the guidance as “...All teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable.”

There have been suggestions that schools should narrow their curriculum to enable pupils to “catch up” on core subjects. I will not be doing this. The breadth and variety of our specialist curriculum has been widely recognised as a key strength of our provision. Pupils who need additional core subject support will receive every possible help, guidance and intervention. We will work with them over time to identify their individual requirements and evaluate their learning through effective, nationally benchmarked assessments as we always do. We will do all we can to ensure they “catch up”, but we will not sacrifice our principles of a broad engaging curriculum to facilitate this.

We are acutely aware that many of our pupils (and parents!) have made significant efforts to maintain their learning during this time. We need to ascertain the progress they have made in all aspects of the curriculum, as not all children will require catch up support in the same area. We will use our knowledge of their learning to offer appropriate, bespoke support to help them thrive and develop across all aspects of provision.

I am also aware that many of our pupils will have significantly improved their resilience as learners and in particular their ability to learn independently. This is a key life skill which we will continue to develop. We will learn from our experiences over this time and adjust our future practices to

ensure our children maintain their independence and resilience, as this will be vital for their success as they progress through their schooling and beyond.

Perhaps most crucially, it is vital for our pupils to be happy and settled once they return to school. Only then will they be able to learn effectively. Much of our initial (and indeed ongoing) focus, will be on ensuring we support our children's emotional and social wellbeing during what will be an incredibly difficult time of readjustment. We will work closely with you to ensure we offer the most appropriate support for your child.

In essence, the desire to have 550 pupils return to school is one I share. We must all accept as a school community that there will inevitably be interaction between pupils and year group "bubbles" as we return, although we will do our utmost to minimise this as much as is practicably possible.

I will write to you by the end of this week to set out the finer details of all aspects of our provision for next term. This will help you understand the implications of our changes for your child. I will also add further details to our FAQs page on the website to address particular concerns re September opening. I will be reviewing all our guidance regularly over the summer break and will write to you again during the last week of the holidays to confirm final arrangements. I do hope there will not be any significant changes to our guidance, however, I am sure you appreciate the situation can change over the next 6 or 7 weeks!

I would like to reassure you that I take my responsibility in opening school fully in September extremely seriously. All appropriate Risk Assessments and Health and Safety protocols will be adhered to and implemented in consultation with the Staffordshire Health and Safety advisor.

All our staff are desperate to welcome our pupils back, and we will be working together as a matter of urgency to ensure all necessary arrangements for a fresh start in September will be in place.

Kind regards

P J Bowers

P J Bowers
Headteacher

