

Our Ref: SLT/FSC-0109WSL

Wednesday 1st September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you have had a lovely summer! We've recharged our batteries and are raring to go for a new school year. There has been a buzz around the school over the last week as staff return to get their classrooms ready for the new term and plan their lessons for the weeks ahead. We are all genuinely excited that this year is going to be fantastic for our students and our community. After such a long period of disruption, we can't wait to have the whole school back functioning as normal and feeling like the ambitious, caring and inclusive community that we are unbelievably proud of.

We had a wonderful results day with our Year 11 students on Thursday 12th August. I'm sure you've seen the pictures we released on social media! We're so proud of their results and the way they overcame the difficulties of completing their studies during the pandemic. Their Prom is on Friday 3rd September and this will be a fitting way to say goodbye to a fantastic group of students. They've set the bar high for our new Year 11 cohort but I know they will rise to this challenge and do themselves and this community proud over the next year.

I also want to thank Mrs Burnham for her efforts running our successful summer school for our new Year 7 students. We received lots of positive feedback about this experience and here is just one example from one of our new parents:

'Could you please pass on to all staff involved in the transition activities of Youth Clubs and Summer School our full appreciation of the effort put into welcoming our daughter to your school. Our daughter is only one of two pupils coming to Baysgarth from her primary school and although we were sure that this is the school for her, both we and her were apprehensive about such a change, especially as most of her current Year 6 group is going to another school and she is leaving those friendship groups behind.

She has thoroughly enjoyed the Summer School week, made new friends, learned new skills and can't wait to start in September. It has settled both her nerves and ours about the start in September and has really enthused our other children about joining her in a few years' time! Having had a particularly crazy year, being in and out of school and carrying the weight of worry about the pandemic you could not have done more to welcome those who are about to join you and our thank yous don't seem enough to express our relief and enjoyment at the excitement of our daughter to join Baysgarth this year. Many thanks once again to all involved in such a fun packed, informative welcome and roll on September!'

Covid-19

Covid-19 is still rife in society and it is inevitable that there will be a spike in cases when we return to school. The role the school plays in fighting the virus has now changed and it's worth just pointing out some of the things you will see and those that you won't in school now:

What will no longer be happening:

- There will be no 'bubbles' in school and students will be free to mix between year groups, so we will be returning to vertical tutoring.
- There will be no need to social distance, so assemblies will be allowed to take place regularly.

- There will be no facemasks, other than on the school buses and taxis, where the government insists these are still to be worn. Students are of course free to continue to wear a mask should they wish.
- Schools will not be contact tracing and will not be sending home close contacts of anyone who has tested positive. This will mean far less disruption to school life.

What we will still see:

- Students will be expected to wash hands regularly, use hand sanitiser and wipe down tables at the end of every lesson.
- Students will still be expected to be outside the buildings at break and lunchtime unless they are in one of the dining halls.
- Students will still have to carry out lateral flow tests at home on Sundays and Wednesdays before until at least the end of September (**but results do not need to be reported to the school unless they are positive**). Home testing kits will be distributed when we return to school.
- We will still operate an enhanced cleaning schedule in school with daytime cleaners operating throughout the school day.

We do have to test students in school twice in the first couple of weeks of term and as a result we have staggered the start of the term. Years 7, 8 and 11 will all be in full time from Thursday 2nd September, as planned. They will follow a bespoke programme for these two days; not their usual timetabled lessons. We will make sure our new students feel welcome, safe and comfortable in their new surroundings, with our brilliant Year 11s to act as role models for them and our Year 8s to show them the ropes. During these two days, our Year 9 and Year 10 students will work from home with lessons and work set remotely via Google Classroom. Everybody will then be back in school from Monday 6th September. **As far as your child's timetable is concerned, week beginning Monday 6th September will be Week A.**

In order to complete these tests in school, we do need parental permission. We already hold this for all Year 8-11 students from last year, however, **we urgently need this for our new Year 7 students, so if you have not already completed the consent form, please do so [here](#)** by the end of today.

Close Contacts of Positive Cases

As parents will be aware, unvaccinated young people up to the age of 18 years and 6 months, and fully vaccinated adults, are now no longer required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with Covid-19, including if they live in the same household.

Those identified as a close contact will be informed by NHS Test and Trace that they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. The government strongly encourages all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. There is no requirement to self-isolate while awaiting PCR test results and so students and staff identified as close contacts should continue to attend school as usual.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Students

We have been asked several times over the last 18 months about students with underlying health problems and whether they should be in school if they are considered clinically extremely vulnerable. The latest advice from the Department for Education is clear:

'Clinical studies have shown that children and young people, including those originally considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), are at very low risk of serious illness if they catch the virus. The UK Clinical Review Panel has recommended that all children and young people under the age of 18 should no longer be considered CEV and should be removed from the Shielded Patient List, the national database of people considered clinically extremely vulnerable.'

Therefore, we expect all students to be in school from September. After such a long period of disruption in education, it is critically important that every child comes to school every day. The only reason not to be in school is if a child is displaying Covid-19 symptoms, in which case they should book and take a PCR test immediately. If a child develops Covid-19 symptoms when in school, they will be sent home, but this will not affect any other students.

Vaccination for Year 11 Students When They Turn 16

16-year olds are now eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine and this is really easy to arrange through the 'grab-a-jab' [NHS Online Walk-In Finder](#). We encourage our students to take up the offer of vaccination once they reach their 16th birthday.

The government have created some resources to reassure parents about the return to school:

- [The Education Hub](#): A blog on what pupils and their families can expect when they return to school and college this September. This answers some common questions and explains some of the changes pupils will notice this term.
- [Parent FAQ leaflets](#): For early years, primary, secondary and Further Education settings to share with parents and answer any questions about the return.
- [Gov.uk Guidance](#): explaining [what parents and carers need to know about attending schools and colleges in 2021](#).
- [Education Catch Up](#): listing extra support available to parents to help any pupils catch up on lost learning or boost their wellbeing.

Uniform and Equipment

We haven't heard of any significant uniform issues over the summer holidays, so we are looking forward to seeing all of our students looking smart and ready for school over the next few days. The vast majority of our students will comply fully with our strict uniform regulations. Sometimes, students fall foul of our rules and we've attached a reminder to this letter to make sure you are clear on our expectations (you can also find this on our [website](#)). In particular, please make sure that the rules are followed on:

- Jewellery and piercings: the summer holidays is often a time when piercings are acquired, so make sure you are clear on our rules
- Make-up and nails: students sometimes have acrylics over the summer and these need to be removed before they return
- Footwear: black, polishable, smart shoes with no branding, trainer-styles etc

If you are having any problems with uniform, please get in touch - we far prefer to know about any issues in advance and be prepared for them.

We will be providing all our Year 7 students with a basic equipment pack consisting of a pen, pencil, ruler, rubber, pencil sharpener, mini whiteboard and whiteboard pen. We know some parents have been buying stationery and that is welcomed, but we want to ensure every student has the necessary equipment and this is not a barrier to their learning. We will then require parents to support us by ensuring it is replenished as we go through the year.

To support parents with this, there will be opportunities to buy stationery at Student Support before school and breaktime if any student forgets to bring the necessary materials or if materials run out. No money will be taken, the cost will be added to [ParentPay](#), so you as parents can also monitor how your child is looking after their equipment. As a school, we will be having a big push on students taking responsibility for their own equipment and there will be sanctions for students who do not correct it and make use of the stationery shop.

It is recommended that all students have a bag for school which they can carry their equipment and homework in. We notice some of the older students stop bringing bags and this becomes a barrier to them being prepared, so support from parents in ensuring this is included in the back to school organisation would be most welcome.

New Building

It's been slow progress over the summer as our contractor, GS Kelsey, like all other construction firms, battles to obtain the equipment needed to start the build. However, our main car park is now completely out of use so we only have around 30 parking spaces at the front of school. This is a problem as we now have well over 100 staff cars arriving every day and we have made contingency plans for them on other areas of our site. It will be really difficult for parents and visitors to find any parking on the school site, so apologies for any frustration that this may cause you between now and Easter 2022. Until our new building opens next Easter, we will have to accommodate 930 students in a school built for only 900. The school will be busy at lesson changeover and breaks and lunchtimes, and we will be reiterating to our students the need to be polite, patient and sensible on our corridors. I'd appreciate it if you could make this point with them as well.

School Day

Just a reminder that we have amended our school day so that we now finish at 2.50pm Monday-Thursday and 2.30pm on a Friday. This is because we have added Collective Reading sessions into our timetable four days a week. Taking these sessions out of tutor time is really important to us as it allows our tutors to spend more time talking to each student and becoming their champion in school. It also gives us dedicated reading time - addressing one of the key areas that we know has suffered under the pandemic.

Term Dates

These are attached to this letter and can also be found on our [website](#) – a polite reminder that our additional school closure day to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be on **Friday 22nd October 2021**, rather than April next year to shorten the longest term of the year and hopefully give families the opportunity to get away at October half term.

The Year Ahead

As I said at the beginning of this letter, this is a palpable excitement around the school at the beginning of this term as we look forward to the year ahead. Loads of fantastic things will be happening and these are just some of the highlights that we are all looking forward to:

- The resumption of all of our after-school clubs and activities, backed up by late buses so that all students can attend, even if they do not live in Barton.
- All Parents' Evenings will take place online, so that there is no more frustration queuing up or fear of missing appointment times.
- Our school musical production and other opportunities for students to showcase their talents to the local community.
- The return of vertical tutoring, allowing our younger students to have older 'brothers and sisters' to take care of them, model excellent behaviours and strengthen our family feel.
- Inspire Time activities on a Wednesday every Week B, with students able to explore a range of different interests and activities during the school day from Street Golf to Escape Rooms.

All we ask of you is to ensure your child(ren) attend school every day and give their best when they are here. The best ways we can support our children to become successful adults is to reinforce the need to be reliable, punctual, trustworthy, hardworking and to embody our values of Respect, Resilience and Responsibility. Together we will create the outstanding education community that this area and our young people, current and future, deserves.

As many of you know, I lost my Dad to cancer last year, having seen very little of him in his last months of life as he was deemed extremely clinically vulnerable and therefore self-isolating. Many of you will have been in similar situations over the last 18 months. I'm running the Great North Run on 12th September to raise money in his memory for Cancer Research UK. I'm not a runner and never have been, so for someone in his fifties with no experience this is quite a challenge! I've been training over the summer as much as my protesting hips, knees and ankles will allow and I'm now nervously waiting for race day. Thank you to all the parents and members of staff who have already supported me and I'm now more than halfway to my fundraising target

of £500. If you'd like to support me, the link to the Just Giving page is here:
<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/richards-giving-page-693>.

We look forward to welcoming all our students over the next few days for what we are sure will be a wonderful year!

Yours faithfully



Mr R Briggs
Head Teacher

