



28<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

## Principal's Update – Autumn Term 3

I cannot believe that we are already half way to half term! Whilst our operational arrangements are a daily challenge, especially as we have started to see some wet weather, I have been delighted to see students' engagement in lessons. In many ways, visiting classrooms and seeing students at work, you would not think that there was anything unusual about our circumstances. It is great to see students taking steps towards normality; however, I have reminded them today that we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent with regards to following requirements that are in the interests of public health. In this [message](#), I emphasise the following:

### *Before School...*

1. Do NOT come to school if you or someone in your household has the symptoms of coronavirus – arrange a test and only return when negative or after a period of self-isolation.
2. On the journey to school, follow the *Rule of 6* and wear a face covering on public transport.
3. Arrive on time and wash hands or apply hand sanitiser on arrival.

### *At School...*

4. **Avoid physical contact with others** – no holding hands, hugging, horseplay etc.
5. Avoid close face-to-face contact or extended contact within 2m of others, where possible.
6. Wash hands or apply hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day, especially before and after eating.
7. Remain in the assigned spaces for the “bubble”.
8. All are welcome to wear a face covering in communal areas.

### *After School...*

9. Again, on the journey home, follow the *Rule of 6* and wear a face covering on public transport.

In the message, I talk about our collective responsibility towards the health and wellbeing of our community and how, by following the requirements and doing the right thing, we can reduce the chances of a forced absence from school. I would be grateful if parents would reinforce these important messages with their children and explain their importance.

### *Meet the Tutor*

Thank you to parents who met with their child's Tutor virtually last Monday and those who will be meeting with their child's Tutor today. I hope these opportunities for early dialogue have been useful. They represent our first attempts at using technology to support multiple meetings simultaneously and so we will apply lessons learnt to future Parents' Evenings. If you have any particular feedback which you think might be helpful, please email [meetthetutor@riddlesdown.org](mailto:meetthetutor@riddlesdown.org).

### *Extra-Curricular Clubs*

We were pleased to begin to operate some [extra-curricular activities](#) last week. The groupings and timings have been carefully planned to ensure that “bubbles” can be kept separated. We know that opportunities to learn outside of the classroom and participate in activities like these are an important

and valued part of our provision and I hope that we shall be able to maintain and build on this, whilst giving due care and attention to health and safety matters. School trips remain suspended, at least until Christmas – we shall review the position in the new year.

### *Virtual Open Evening*

We would usually welcome more than 2500 visitors to our site in a series of Open Events at this time of year. Sadly, it is not sensible to hold such events this year; indeed, the Local Authority is advising against it. However, we still wish prospective Year 7 students and parents to have good opportunities to get to know us better and so, in addition to our [digital prospectus](#) which is on the website, we shall very shortly be releasing a promotional video and offering a **Virtual Open Evening on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 5.00pm**. This event will give viewers the opportunity to hear from me and some students, as well as ask questions using a “live chat” facility. The event will be recorded and available for view afterwards, as well. A link with further details will be posted on the Admissions page of our website soon.

### *Welcome to Year 7 Evening*

Parents of Year 7 students will shortly receive a letter with a link to a virtual event – this is in place of an opportunity to welcome in person. I hope that the information will be useful. As always, please get in touch if you have any further questions.

### *Post-16 Transition*

Following the superb achievements of students in College VI this summer and the extensive refurbishment of our facilities, I am not surprised that Year 11 students have already been asking about the Post-16 application process. We will have to do things differently this year, but as with prospective Year 7 students, we are keen to ensure that prospective Year 12 students and their parents have good opportunities to find out more about our excellent Sixth Form provision and success. The College VI Handbook for 2021 Entry is currently being finalised and will be published shortly (the [Handbook for 2020 Entry](#) is still on our website, for reference). In addition, we shall write to Year 11 students next week with links to further information and a timeline for the process.

### *Absence – When is it right? When is it unnecessary? How should it be reported?*

Understandably, as some students develop symptoms of coronavirus or someone in their household does, they have been absent from school and awaiting a negative test result or serving a period of self-isolation – this is correct and students should continue to do this. Parents are asked to contact [attendance@riddlesdown.org](mailto:attendance@riddlesdown.org) on each day that a student is absent (not just the first day). However, some students have now been absent following symptoms that are [not normal symptoms](#) of coronavirus: a runny nose, sneezing or feeling unwell. It is not unusual for students to experience these symptoms at this time of year and, in themselves, they do not require a student to be absent or to self-isolate. I understand that students and parents may be anxious and may wish to err on the side of caution, but I would encourage students to continue to attend school every day unless their symptoms or condition do not allow them to.

The NHS has published some useful information on [whether a child is too ill for school](#) and has also provided this [letter from NHS Test & Trace](#) for parents. In addition, the new NHS COVID-19 app is now available to download for free. Information and resources including [guidance on how to download](#) the app and a [leaflet for parents](#) explaining how the app works are available on the NHS website.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Dey  
Principal