



THE BUCKINGHAM SCHOOL

A SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE

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23 March 2020

Dear Students, Staff, Parents and Carers

In my latest update, I will address a number of issues, so please would parents and carers of all age groups read through the whole letter.

Parent Mail

Just a general note that Parent Mail is crashing regularly at the moment. We expect this situation to calm down.

Social Distancing

We have received a number of contacts from concerned members of the community about the numbers of children out and about this weekend. This relates to all children in Buckingham, not just necessarily those who attend here. Meanwhile, today, we have seen our own students in the streets around the school. Please can we support our NHS by following the instructions issued by the Government. Please keep your children at home.

School Office – Phones and Email

As of Tuesday 24th March, the School office will be closed.

Please do not contact the School by phone, as these messages will not be collected.

As of today, we will revert to only responding to the School office email address (office@buckinghamsschool.org) during the working day.

Social Media

We have reiterated to all staff today, that they are not to make social media contact with students, or recent leavers. In particular, our Year 11 and Year 13 students should bear in mind that we are not being unfriendly, just obeying the law! Their School email addresses will remain operational until the end of the year and are welcome to contact staff via their school email address.

Ongoing Opening

Further to what we learned from BBC News last week, we have now received some limited guidance from official channels.

School remains open to those students who we work with more closely, including those who have an EHCP and those who have a social worker attached to them. We have contacted most of these families directly, but there are further groups we will contact today.

The Buckingham School is concerned that every student should have the opportunity to attend school activities/obtain equipment, regardless of their financial circumstances. As such, it may be possible to subsidise those students who would otherwise be unable to attend trips/purchase items. Please feel free to write in confidence to Mrs K Bones at kbones@buckinghamsschool.org, if you wish to seek assistance, or obtain more information about Pupil Premium funding.



We are open indefinitely, including holiday time (except Easter weekend itself) to children of Key Workers, either where they are a lone parent, or both parents are Key Workers. However, we are advised to extend this offering to all of our Key Worker families, Years 7 to 13, and will be contacting parents today. We will do our best, on very stretched resources, to provide something significantly more valuable than simply childcare. For those students attending School, buses are running as normal.

Important: the Government have been clear that the offering for children to be at School is against the principle of social distancing and families should only send their children to School when there is no other choice. The School needs to minimise the number of staff needed each day, because they need to participate in social distancing themselves.

Please note my comments about social distancing above. We will refuse to admit a child if we discover they have not exercised social distancing whilst at home.

Distance Learning

What is becoming clear already from the feedback from year 8 and year 9 parents (their children have already been away for three days) is that we haven't got the balance right of work set, what is set and how it is set. Further, we will consider today and this week, not only what we want students to do during this time, but what we want them to experience.

Parents: in the short term, whilst we refine this process, please do not be afraid to step in and make decisions about what your child is doing. The work we set is to keep them engaged in education, not to occupy their time for no benefit. Nor do we want students anxious because there is too much work, or it is too hard, or... You are not expected to replace teachers and we would much rather you spent your time with your child doing other activities, such as reading, getting fresh air, playing games or completing puzzles.

Isolation and Mental Health/Well-being

Paula Matthews, our Mental Health Lead and herself a qualified counsellor, will be writing to you today. There will be lots of advice in her letter, from ways of behaving through to suggested resources.

If you or your child have any worries about any aspect of your child's time away from school, please contact us, and the right person will help you.

External Examinations

The latest we know is what you will have heard on the news. The Government have said that they will brief schools about how examination results are to be awarded, but that has not happened yet.

However, my understanding is this: grades will be awarded, based on information that we hold about your child. This will include mock results, written work in books and prior attainment data. Some students may be left feeling hard done by in this process and the intention is students can elect to take an examination after all, early in the next academic year. We believe that this would replace the first result, even if the first result were to have been a higher grade.

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Students will have the opportunity to see what grades they are awarded in (we think) July, then to accept these, or take an exam after all.

Therefore, for now, please can all Year 11 and 13 students stay engaged with current studies, until we are absolutely certain what the arrangements are. If not sooner, I am meeting with my adviser on Thursday 26 March, and expect to be armed with facts after that meeting.

A Special Note of Thanks to Our Staff

Just to note that Matthew Watkins, Chair of Governors and I have written to the school's staff today:

"Dear Colleague,

We wanted to write to you at the end of a few very challenging weeks.

This letter does not signal the end of this period of uncertainty and fears of what is to come but, nevertheless, the community is rightly singing the praises of its fantastic School right now. In fact, the community has never been prouder of its School.

In Andy's January video, he spoke of the importance of dispersed leadership. The hugely increased capacity of the School's leadership has shone through in the last couple of weeks. The School's Senior Team has been fantastic and Middle Leaders have risen to the challenges we have faced with skill, commitment and purpose.

However, best of all, the whole School team of teaching and non-teaching staff has risen to the challenges together. You do not have to have the word "leader" in your job title to be a leader.

On behalf of the community and the governors of the school, we say a big 'Thank you'. The situation we all find ourselves in will eventually end, however tough times are yet to come, but at this point, it is worth reflecting that you have conducted yourself amazingly well.

Stay safe, and make sure that you look after your own, as well as carrying on as best you can with your role at the school."

Lastly, I would like to thank you all, once again, for your continued support of our School and students during this time of uncertainty and change.

Yours faithfully



Andrew McGinnes

Headteacher

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