



THE BUCKINGHAM SCHOOL

A SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of term, the most important message I can give is...

Thank You!

In the last 18 months, it is fair to say that I have used the word “challenge” more than I have in the whole of the rest of my life put together. It is also fair to say that the school has been privileged to receive so much support from its community. We are rightly proud of our school, and the way that we have continued to support and educate our students, despite the restrictions. We are very aware that we could not have managed this without your support and encouragement - it has kept our hard-working and deeply committed staff going.

On the note of our staff, I know the community would want to take a moment to consider what it has meant to work in a school in the last twelve months. We have no sense here at the school that the pandemic has somehow thrown more at us than anyone else. However, my colleagues have shown the most incredible versatility and open-mindedness, and have coped with just about everything that has been thrown at them. Change upon change, when schools depend on stable routines. Even in this last week of term, I have had to seriously consider closing parts of the school because of more staff shortages caused by self-isolation, but my colleagues have risen even further over and above their contracted hours to see our students through to the end of the year.

Arrangements to Note for September

- Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd September: Staff training days (closed to students)
- Friday 3rd September: Year 7 and Year 12 attend school for induction days (no other students)
- Monday 6th September: School fully open for all students

All students will be required to wear the correct school uniform/sixth form business dress to begin the term. We note in particular the school's policy on skirt material and length, and also that trainers, unnatural hair colouring, nose-piercings, coloured/fake nails are not allowed. Hoodies may not be worn.

On the note of skirts, I would like to make one thing clear. Girls can expect to be challenged about either of two things, if needed skirt length and skirt material. This will be by any member of staff, and there is no special exclusion that prevents male staff from making challenges. Skirt length is part of our policy. I expect our male staff to enforce all policy.

In terms of the rules and guidance for COVID-19, we have learned that much can change in the coming weeks. You will also be aware that the school has regularly enforced measures that are more stringent than the guidance. Nevertheless, as it stands, we will not be asking students or staff to wear facemasks in September. I foresee a permanent measure being that all members of the community may wear a face covering, if they choose. Other routines, particularly one-way systems, are here to stay, as our school grows.

In terms of mind-set, I would like the community to bear in mind that, as we reached the end of term, we were just starting to be significantly affected by the latest wave. With multiple staff absences, we would have considered closing the school to groups of students but made the decision to see out



the last few days on this occasion. Make no mistake: at the time of writing, there are 51,870 reported new cases today and nearly 4,000 people in hospital.

Teaching Staff

We will be very sorry to lose a number of teaching staff at the end of this term. For a number of factors we have a higher turnover than normal, a situation mirrored by many schools. Mr Fox, Deputy Headteacher, leaves us to join Cottesloe School and I would like to personally thank him for his dedication to our school, and say how much I have enjoyed working closely with him.

We also say a fond farewell to Mr Agyemang, Mr Churchward, Dr Coomber, Mrs Cowley, Miss Hare, Mr Minns, Mr O'Malley, Mr Osborne, Miss Smith, Mrs Stewart, Mr Waymark and Mrs Wilkinson. In there we have two colleagues taking up senior leadership posts in their new school, as well as exciting relocations. Thank you to all of these staff who have made excellent contributions to this school's journey. You will recognise that some of our departing staff have given the school many years of service. Thank you to them all and good luck for the future.

Meanwhile, we have completed the appointments of the new teaching staff and I look forward to introducing them to you in September.

Summer Closure Arrangements

Friday 16th July was the final day of the summer term and I wish all students and staff a happy summer break. Please note that we will be unable to respond to any communications sent after this time. The first day of term is **Friday 6th September (note, not all students)**, and we will endeavour to respond to communication from this day.

During this period, if you have any concerns regarding coronavirus then you should call **NHS 111** and ask to speak to an advisor who will be able to give you the support that you need.

Summer Support

During the summer holidays, parents and students can contact the following sources of support.

Whom can I contact for support?

- Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or by calling 0800 1111
- Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk>
- Kooth: <https://www.kooth.com>
- NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk> or call 0808 800 5000
- Buckinghamshire Children's Services:
<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/care-children-and-families/>
- NHS England: Call 111 or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/>
- Guidance on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Buckingham Food Bank: <https://www.bpchurch.uk/>

Suicide Prevention:

I want to also remind you of the support available via Papyrus; an organisation dedicated to the prevention of young suicide. Tragically, suicide is the biggest killer of young people – male and female – under 35 in the UK and every year thousands more attempt or contemplate suicide, harm themselves or suffer alone, afraid to speak openly about how they are feeling.

If you are the parent of a young person who experiences these thoughts or feelings of this kind, then we would strongly advise that you seek an appointment with your GP and that you access the following support channel available through Papyrus (below):

HOPELINEUK is a confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned for a young person who might be you can contact HOPELINEUK for confidential support and practical advice.

Call: 0800 068 4141

Text: 07860 039 967

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org



Free Education Resources to Enjoy

This is a list of FREE online education resources, which may be of interest for students:

Khan Academy

<https://www.khanacademy.org>

Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but also other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it is mostly common material.

BBC Learning

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/>

This site is old and no longer updated and yet there is much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV licence required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

Futurelearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com>

Free to access 100s of courses

Seneca

<https://www.senecalearning.com>

For those revising at GCSE or A level. Free revision content

Scratch

<https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/>

Creative computer programming

Ted Ed

<https://ed.ted.com>

All sorts of engaging educational videos

National Geographic Kids

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

Activities and quizzes for younger kids

Duolingo

<https://www.duolingo.com>

Learn languages for free. Web or app

2021/22

With our eternally optimistic view, The Buckingham School looks forward to the opportunities the new school year will present. We will strive to take standards yet higher, The Buckingham Way. We will be striving to bring the virtues of ambition, confidence, curiosity, empathy, integrity, respect and resilience even further to the fore.

The Buckingham Way says that we:

- Take personal responsibility for our actions
- Strive to improve, every day
- Respect the authority of our staff

Every new school year launches with a re-emphasising of standards, not least so the new students can quickly understand about them. For example, in recent weeks we have extended a great deal of tolerance towards uniform issues, because we understand the financial challenges that many families have faced in the last year and more. However, in September, we will be placing uniform at the top of our standards agenda, as well as preparing for a consultation on some changes. Please visit our [website](#) for more information on uniform standards.

Equally, we have been similarly understanding, for all of the same reasons, on the matter of bags and equipment. Again, we will be emphasising the basic equipment needed for successful learning when we return in September. Please see the school [website](#).



We are excited that the £2.8m investment by the authority has been concluded and we are adding to this with a reorganisation of our student services. We are creating a Student Hub, which will be the single place for students in need of support to go to – whether it be medical attention or any of the multitude of services that we offer. This promises to make the daily experiences of students more straightforward.

A big push next year will be to take the standards we have achieved in establishing a generally lovely climate around the school (so-called Behaviour for Learning) and pushing standards of how students go about their learning yet higher (so-called Behaviour in Learning). For this, they will need to demonstrate their readiness to learn and take an active part in every moment of every lesson, every day. We have four grades for “attitude to learning”:

- (Utterly) Dedicated
- (Fully) Committed
- (Merely) Compliant
- (Unacceptably) Reluctant

“Compliant” is the student who does only what is expected. Our ambition as a school is to foster consistently higher standards than that!

To support this, we have a fantastic plan of teacher professional development for the coming year. Success is for ALL.

School Improvement Plan

What are we planning to do next year? The School’s ongoing commitment to keep improving is laid out in the school improvement plan, which will soon be available on the school website. Key ambitions include:

- Driving standards in the classroom yet higher, on the part of both students and staff - The Buckingham Way of doing things
- Further broadening the horizons of our students ensuring that they explore tolerance and respect of difference, including people of all genders, ethnicities, sexuality and gender identity
- Re-establishing and extending our community reach, including formation of Friends of Buckingham School, and establishing an alumni network
- Engaging directly with staff, students and parents in our judgements about how well we are doing and in our decision-making

Bring on 21-22 we say!

In the meantime, have an amazing summer. I look forward to seeing everyone in September.

Best wishes



Mr Andrew McGinnes
Headteacher