

15 July 2020

Dear parents

September opening of Valence School – Monday 7 September 2020

As current parents are aware the School has been open for some students on a part-time basis since the 23 March. Other students have received learning support at home and on behalf of the Governing Body I would like to thank you for your co-operating with school staff and the way in which you have supported your child's learning at home.

On Tuesday the full Governing Body had a virtual meeting using Microsoft Teams and considered how the School was dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and the preparations that it is making for the full opening of the School in September. What is very clear is that there is an enormous task of preparation still ahead once we cease the use by students currently on-site of boarding and classroom accommodation at the end of next week. This will involve a large movement of furniture, the provision of additional computers, cameras and other IT equipment, the provision of dedicated medication cabinets for each class as well as some additional medication fridges. This is apart from the on-going arrangements that have to be put in place for cleaning and infection control and detailed planning for transport, moving around the site, the provision of class-based catering and other practical arrangements.

In line with Government guidance we are going to operate a 'bubble' system to minimise the number of contacts students and staff have. There will be class-based 'bubbles' operating during the school day with designated and separate outside areas as well as 'bubbles' for boarding students. As far as is practical staff rotas will be used to align daytime and residential staffing. Arrangements will also be put in place for the safe provision of nursing and therapies. There will be no use of the P.E sports hall or swimming pool during the first term at least, although some P.E activities and physical management will take place within each class-based 'bubble.' Specialist subject teaching will be delivered remotely through subject teachers pre-recording lessons, or by live streaming their lessons into classroom 'bubbles'. Assigned teaching and support staff will remain in their class 'bubble' to enable students to fully participate in those lessons.

The Governing Body have determined that, due to the extreme vulnerability of many of our children and young people extensive on-site preparations involving all staff, many of whom have been working at home will need to be made during the first four days of term. This is to ensure that all health and safety arrangements are in place, working and are robust. It will also enable the School to offer assessments for some of our students if there are issues we need to resolve before School re-opens, such as moving and handling. In addition, we will be using this time to finalise preparations for the new students who will be joining us. **Existing students will therefore return to School on Monday 7 September when both day-time and boarding provision will fully open. New students will commence attending week commencing Monday 14 September and we will be in touch with each family about this before the end of this term.**

The preparation days which the Governing Body has determined on health and safety grounds will also be used to ensure staff are equipped and up-to-date with their skills so that they can fully meet the needs of the students they will be working with. It is however not the Governing Body's intention to use Staff Development Days for the preparations as it envisages these will be essential later in the School year to provide staff with statutory training and development. The preparation days will also be used to 'road test' the new technology that will be installed during the summer break to ensure that the curriculum can be successfully delivered from day one when the students return. There will be the necessary work on preparation tasks related to students' support needs and plans, updating Medication Administration Record charts and the briefing of the staff who will be working in each 'bubble.'

I wanted to set out a summary of our plans which will involve intensive work during the summer break as well as during the first four days of the school year. Senior staff will be telephoning all of you before the end of term and there will be designated contact numbers throughout the holiday period.

Assuring you of the Governing Body's determination to make the best and safest provision for September.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Davies
Chair of Governors