



CHENEY SCHOOL
Think for yourself, act for others

Headteacher: Mr Rob Pavey

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Dear parents and carers,

I would like to express my own thanks and the thanks of the whole staff to our students and parents for their support in getting the school open once again. It has been a joy to have a school full of students, rather than just a collection of empty buildings. Our students have been fantastic, almost without exception, despite the circumstances. We don't underestimate the challenges for our young people in coming back to school (and in some cases, starting a new school) for the first time in six months, and in adapting to a new way of working. They have been mature, sensible and courteous and have risen to the challenges in a most impressive manner.

This is not to say that there have been no teething problems; there have been, and we have addressed them as we have gone along. New issues will no doubt crop up, and there are a few things which we are still working on, but overall, the new systems have worked very well. The Cheney teaching staff have shown amazing flexibility and good will in adapting to the situation, and to having to move rooms between every lesson rather than having their own teaching space.

Parent survey

We welcome parents' feedback, and will act on it wherever we can, although the situation is complicated, and there are many different shades of opinion on most subjects. I would like to make one plea; it is much easier to respond positively if emails are courteous, and written with the understanding that we are all learning and doing our very best.

We would like to get some more quantifiable information on the return to school, and on our preparation for future lockdowns. Please fill in the short survey on the link below to help us improve our planning.

Parent return to school survey: <https://forms.gle/dexDCsVWUqZKJX2E9>

We have had feedback from a lot of sources, including the parent Q&A we held last night. Some answers and clarifications to questions asked are at the end of this letter.

Preparation for future lockdowns

We already have the situation where some students in each class are absent, whether through self-isolation, thorough post-travel quarantine or for the normal reasons. It is also likely that some form of wider self-isolation or lockdown will occur at some point over the

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autumn or winter. We aim to continue the normal timetable running as far as possible, with lessons being live-streamed to any students who are absent for whatever reason. We are trialling the system right now, and the initial indications are very positive.

For this to work effectively, we need every student to be able to access the internet throughout the normal school day, and to have practised logging on to their Google Classrooms in advance. Each student will therefore need a quiet space to work and access to their own device.

The parent survey contains a section on this, and we need to know the scale of the barriers facing our students; the aim is for students who cannot reliably access online learning every day to come into school for in-person teaching, in the same way as for the key worker school over the summer. More information on this provision will be circulated once we have greater clarity on what restrictions will be placed on us and what the scale of the need is.

Face masks

We have taken account of the changing government rules on socialising, and on the rising number of cases nationally, and although this does not apply directly to schools, we have decided to make an adjustment to our policy. In assemblies, we are now making masks compulsory, as it is the only occasion when an entire bubble is together inside. Elsewhere, we continue to encourage students to wear masks when it gets crowded, in line with our motto, “think for yourself, act for others”, and many students are now doing so.

Answers to questions posed during Q&A

School clubs

We will restart clubs as soon as we can, within year group bubbles. This is likely to take us a little time, and year teams will be in touch when the shape of this is clear. At the minute, we don't know when school sporting fixtures will restart, but I anticipate a longer delay.

Assessments

We are looking at the shape of the assessment calendar, which will be informed by what our teachers are saying from their experience in the classroom in the first couple of weeks. We are very conscious of the need to settle students back into school, and to avoid setting students up to fail, but equally to get sufficient reliable data to plan interventions and to give students sufficient preparation for exams. We are likely to delay the first formal assessment

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until after half term, although departments will be doing low stakes testing under their own arrangements before that.

Covid testing

There are currently no plans for weekly testing of staff (although we would welcome it if it became possible). We have a small number of home testing kits, which we can use in school, with parents' permission. We have also been in touch with Oxford Brookes University about the testing facility they are setting up, which we will have access to, if we need it.

PE kit

Students should come in a Cheney PE kit on days when they have PE, but not otherwise. Changing rooms are only to be used in emergencies. They may wear their blazer or school jumper over the top of it if they wish. This should not be used as an opportunity to wear general sportswear which is not students' usual PE kit.

Bike parking

We are getting some extra bike racks at the Year 8 and Year 9 entrances by the sports field, which will relieve some of the pressure on the main bike cages. Although these will be inside the school's outer gate, they will not be in a large lockable cage, and will therefore not be as secure as the ones in the main bike park.

Kind Regards,

Rob Pavey

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