

Dear parents and carers,

September 2021 - start of year arrangements

This is a very administrative letter (much of it repeated from the end of last term); there will be a more interesting (depending on your point of view) letter from me at the end of next week containing some development priorities, some low-jargon vision stuff and an update on where our leavers have gone on to. A financial overview, an update on the merger with River Learning Trust and some news about buildings and investments in equipment will follow by the end of September.

Welcoming Year 7s: we are really excited to be welcoming all our new year 7's on Thursday 2 and Friday 3 September. These two days will be their transition experience and will focus on a tour of the site, meeting and working with their tutor group and sampling a range of lessons. Please see [Mrs Hart's letter](#) of 14 July which includes key information including consent for Lateral flow testing which will take place on site in September.

Start of term: the school will be closed to students for Staff INSET on Tuesday 31 August and Wednesday 1 September.

The school will open to **Year 7** and **Year 12** students for induction/transition on **Thursday 2 September**, plus to **Year 13** for Lateral Flow Tests.

The school will open to **all students** on **Friday 3 September**. Year 7 will continue their transition and Year 12 and Year 13 will follow a normal timetable. Years 8-11 will have Lateral Flow Tests and extended tutor time and will return home after tutor time.

Arrangements for Lateral Flow Tests: we will run the school's asymptomatic testing in the same way as we did after lockdown in March. Students will come in one year group at a time, and will be divided into three venues, by tutor group. As previously, there will be smaller venues for students who are nervous or need greater assistance.

Any student who has tested positive on a PCR test within 90 days should not take part in the Lateral Flow Tests, as there is a significant risk of a false positive.

Here is a link to a demonstration video I made back in March (students who were with us last year will already have seen this) to explain how to do the Lateral Flow Tests, and what will happen in school. Please ignore the dates, as they referred to the return from lockdown in March. There are also some newer tests, which only require a nasal swab, and which work faster. It may be that we have some of these, as well as the older kits that were delivered before the holidays, but the testing assistants will make it clear what needs to happen when students are in the testing centre.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E3dWVYjmTdliOuZarY9mKrVCXKz-t_Yo/view?usp=sharing

Once we have done the lateral flow test, students in Years 8-11 (Year 7 and Sixth Form are different), will go to their tutor room for an extended tutor time. After this, they will go home. Years 8-11 will therefore be in school for 90 minutes to 2 hours on this day.

The times that each year group should arrive are below. All year groups will line up on the tennis courts in tutor groups.

Thursday 2 September

- Year 7: 8.00 - 8.25
- Year 12: 9.45
- Year 13: 11.15

Friday 3 September

- Year 8: 8.45
- Year 9: **10.45**
- Year 10: **9.45** (earlier because we will be doing updated photographs)
- Year 11: 11.45

Please note that Year 9 and 10 are out of sequence, because we will be doing updated photographs for Year 10, which will be available for parents to buy in the usual way from the photographers.

The full school timetable will start on Monday 6 September. The second of the Lateral Flow Tests will be done during the school day on Monday 6 September (Year 7 and Sixth Form) and Tuesday 7 September (other year groups) during the school day. We therefore hope to limit disruption to learning from Covid to one lesson in the entire of the Autumn term; long may that last.

Students will be given packs of Lateral Flow Tests to do at home twice weekly, once we have completed the two in-school tests.

Consent for Lateral Flow Tests: we need parental consent for all students under the age of 16, and we appreciate consent for those over 16 as well, although it is not strictly necessary. We will also ask students if they consent, so there will be effectively a double consent for every student who is tested: any student is free to decline the test if they wish to at any point. There is no need for parents to give consent twice, so we will use the consent records from March, and the consent forms included in Mrs Hart's letter of July 14 for new Year 7s. In case Year 7 parents have not yet let us know whether they consent or not, here is the link to the form from Mrs Hart's letter:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdxziKwXafYtLcoHHgRgJq4j2GgS2NwJ34iLWkioXoflrQM/Qw/viewform?usp=sf_link

If you have changed your mind, and wish to alter your consent, please email the relevant year team.

Year Teams 2021-2022

Year 7: Head of Student Progress, Andy Ransome (ar@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Vicki Allsworth (val@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Year 8: Head of Student Progress, Tom Stacey (tst@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Rachael Clear (rcl@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Year 9: Head of Student Progress, Becky Robson (rro@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Tom Haines (thn@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Year 10: Head of Student Progress, Andrew Olubodun (aol@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Lee Fieldwick (lfi@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Year 11: Head of Student Progress, Lucy Payne (nee Jackson) (please note updated email address: lpayne@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Molly Yalci (mya@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Sixth Form: Head of Sixth Form, Kate Hackett (kh@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Leader, Sarah Warbrick (swr@cheney.oxon.sch.uk); Pastoral Assistant, Jacqui Dearden (jdearden@cheney.oxon.sch.uk)

Open Events/Parents Evenings 2021-2022

- 14 September Open Morning
- 16 September Open Morning
- 22 September Open Morning
- 23 September Y6 Open Evening
- 29 September Y12 Pastoral Evening
- 30 September Y7 Meet the Tutor
- 14 October Y10 Parents' Evening
- 11 November Y8 Parents' Evening
- 2 December 6th Form Open Evening
- 13 January Y11 Parents' Evening
- 27 January Y12 Parents' Evening
- 10 March Y7 Parents' Evening
- 17 March Y13 Parents' Evening
- 5 May Y9 Parents' Evening
- 19 May Y9 Options Deadline
- 7 July Y12 Parents' Evening

Parents evenings are likely to be online, starting with Year 10 in October, using a software package that makes the scheduling and timing of meetings easier. Feedback from parents and staff suggest that most people would prefer to keep this, and the software package we are looking at should be better than running it via Google Meet.

New school day: we are returning to a more normal system for the new academic year, although all of this will be reversible if the pandemic accelerates once again:

- One break and lunch of 30 minutes each. This will allow clubs and activities to resume, and allow sufficient staff on duty.
- The canteen will revert to normal, with the seating back in place and a wider range of food available from different sections of the counter.
- PE changing rooms will be back in use, which means students will no longer be able to come to school in PE kit.
- Instead of 6 different entrances, we will have 4: Year 7 will come in through their own entrance to the side of W block (students will be shown this); Years 8 and 9 will come

through the main attendance gate; Years 10 and 11 will come through the J block gate (last year's Year 10 gate); Sixth Form will retain their normal entrance via the turnstiles.

The new timings for the day are on this link: [The School Day – Cheney School](#)

Uniform: in September we will be expecting every student to come to school wearing the correct uniform proudly. We are also proud to remind parents and students that we have signed up to the HALO hair code in order to remove unconscious bias that has plagued certain groups of students over the years. Details are on the uniform page linked below.

Please ensure that you refer to the uniform page on the school web site and the uniform guidelines in particular to ensure that any uniform you purchase is correct. We would like to stress that hoodies are not acceptable and students wearing hoodies on site will be challenged and expected to remove them. Persistent non-compliance will result in hoodies being confiscated, and may result in detentions. Also please pay particular attention to the PE uniform. Any PE kit with logos other than the school logo, or legwear that is any other colour than black is not acceptable. Please do not spend money on branded sportswear for school, as even small logos will not be acceptable.

[Uniform page](#) on the Cheney School website

Attendance: having high levels of attendance is essential. When students attend regularly, they are able to stay on top of their subjects and they learn well. The government guidance states that a good level of attendance is 95% or better: this still equates to 9 days off in a school year. Personally, I can think of no good reason outside of major illness why a child should need to miss so much school, and I would expect the huge majority of students to achieve 98% attendance or better.

Overall, our attendance last year was well above the national average, but still quite a long way short of the 95% guidance. This is excellent, considering how disruptive the Covid pandemic has been, but is not good enough. This year we will continue to work with parents and carers to ensure that every student attends school every day, and we will be following up on absence swiftly. Follow-up may include phone calls, home visits, meetings, and eventually passing details to County for prosecution.

I need to remind parents that holidays in term time will not be authorised, and may well lead to prosecution. There will be a standard letter from County saying this, which we will pass on in due course.

If you know your child is going to be absent, please use one of the following methods to inform us:

- Complete the Cheney School Student Absence Google Form
- Call the attendance manager Mr Hawkswood on 01865 765726 - Option 1
- Email Mr Hawkswood rhw@cheney.oxon.sch.uk

If leaving a telephone or email message please include the following information:

- The name, form and year group of your child
- Your name and contact details
- Reason for absence
- Expected date of return
- Please inform us for each day of absence

Punctuality: arriving late is disruptive, and we will be focussing on punctuality to ensure that all students arrive at registration and lessons promptly. The move to just one break and lunch time will make it a lot easier to ensure that no students are dragging their feet. Students who wander around

site instead of going straight to class can expect to be challenged, and will receive very limited sympathy.

We would appreciate it if parents would discuss the importance of being on time with their children and help support them to arrive at school with plenty of time to get to registration. When students arrive on time, it helps support an orderly and timely start to lessons. Clearly there are occasions when students are late for legitimate reasons. When this is the case, please provide your child with a note explaining their reason for being late.

Covid update

I have deliberately left this to the end, as we very strongly hope that there will be much less disruption this year, and we are aiming to run a normal school and a normal timetable as far as is humanly possible. The situation locally and nationally appears to have plateaued, albeit at a relatively high level. We will be keeping a very close eye on the situation with the return to school, but I agree with the general principle that we need to get back to normal, and if not now, when?

Government guidance: the latest guidance for schools is on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance#tracing>

Hierarchy of controls: the same hierarchy of controls exists, as before. The first and most important part is not to send your child to school if they have symptoms. Next, is good hygiene and good ventilation as far as temperature and buildings allow. Finally there is track and trace, isolation and the re-imposition of familiar adjustments in school.

Mask wearing: this is no longer advised (see advice above), although everyone is very welcome to continue to use one if they feel more comfortable, and I anticipate some staff and students will want to. It is still advised on public transport (although if I understand it correctly, not compulsory).

Assemblies: we are planning to hold these in person, although we will not make a decision until we see how many students test positive on the Lateral Flow Tests.

Track, trace and isolation: as for the last few days of the summer term, school is no longer involved in tracing close contacts (Track and Trace may ask us for help if the situation require sit). Close contacts of confirmed cases will no longer have to self-isolate, but will be asked to take a PCR test, and only self-isolate if they are confirmed positive.

The following steps will be taken if the situation requires it, or if Public Health teams advise us to step up our measures:

- Masks again become compulsory inside.
- Staff training and meetings move online.
- Assemblies move online.
- Separate entrances and exits.
- Split break and lunch.
- Canteen service reverts to take-away only.
- Limits on visitors.
- Limits on clubs, performances and extra-curricular activities.
- Isolation of larger groups, up to full or partial closure of the school.

I can foresee no circumstances in which it will be helpful to return to geographical bubbles, and therefore not have access to specialist teaching rooms, but we can of course re-institute this if we are directed to do so, or if new information comes to light.

Online teaching and livestreaming: as a school, we have been ahead of the curve on this matter, and as a result, our students have missed the absolute minimum learning over the last year. We all recognise the limitations, however, and I would be the first to admit that it has not been perfect. For some students in some circumstances, livestreaming has made all the difference, and has actually allowed them to have an education, and some students thrived during online school.

We are therefore going to retain the ability to do this, but as part of a planned provision. The least reliable aspect to livestreamed lessons, as well as the most stressful for staff and frustrating for parents, is impromptu streaming, where a teacher is not aware in advance that students will be absent and is asked to start streaming 10 minutes into a lesson. For short term absences, there will be work on the Google Classroom called something like 'in case of absence', which will be refreshed periodically as topics move on. For longer term absence, or to make online learning part of a planned provision, please make contact with the year team or SEND.

Rob Pavey
Headteacher