

2 September 2021

Dear Year 8-11 Parents/ Carers,

I hope that you have been able to enjoy the summer, when it was in evidence. These last six weeks have seen our summer transition school (The Big Step) take place very successfully for new Year 7s, with over 100 pupils taking part. We have also celebrated some great results with our former Year 11s and Year 13s this summer. Despite the many challenges, many of them worked incredibly hard, demonstrating great resilience, and have achieved the excellent results they deserve. Since then, we've been busy getting ready for the new academic year and I think and hope quite a bit more normality as we restart school this September. The following aims to provide all that you need to know for a successful and safe return to school for your child this September.

### **Back to school details**

Attached with this letter is a new publication which we've created for each year group. The year handbooks address your son/daughter directly but aim to give you and them a clear overview of information for the year with key contacts and details which you can refer to if/when needed. Much of the information is not new and will be familiar to you, but please read this through carefully with your child. As well as details of support and who to contact if required, are summaries of our expectations regarding attendance, uniform, lessons and behaviour. Please note that our IT system has just been updated and this means that all staff now have a new email address which ends: @teignmouthschool.co.uk. Also attached is a document which shows the new tutor groups and their locations for this September.

As we commence this new year we will continue to put safety first (please see below) but we are very much looking forward to getting school back to a new sort of normal and a key focus will be on upholding high standards and expectations. This starts with being ready for school and we ask that you check your child's uniform and equipment in coming days before the start of term. Where pupils fall below these standards, we will give them a chance to remedy this and then take action which will involve your support to remedy the issue. We will continue to be understanding of the challenges caused by the ongoing pandemic, but this does not mean tolerating lower standards. Looking ahead, ventilation in schools is a key issue, as I'm sure you're aware, and we will continue to have windows open. As it gets colder, this causes some challenges but we are not going to compromise on uniform standards and allow the wearing of hoodies or non-uniform tops. All years should have a TCS jumper and Years 10 and 11 must also have a blazer (we removed the requirement for Year 9s to have this last year). Pupils should also have a dark, plain coat for inclement weather. Thank you in advance for your support.

The school term will start for Years 8 to 11 and Year 13 pupils on **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September** with tutor registration period at the normal time of 8.50am – pupils should be in school ready for this for 8.45 am. (Please note that any pupil who arrives after tutor time, after 9.10am, will be judged as not just late but as having missed half a day in terms of attendance.) We are then resuming a 'normal' school day timetable without split breaks, as per the handbook. Period 5 finishes at 3.15pm and, as communicated last term, no pupils will be allowed to leave early unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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## Covid Measures

I'm sure you're aware of the changing advice and rules for the pandemic as we are now in 'Stage 4' of the Roadmap. In schools this means that we no longer need to keep pupils in 'bubbles' and we are no longer responsible for contact tracing unless NHS England request our help. However, it is still really important that you continue to let us know if your son/daughter does develop symptoms and if they receive a positive test result – either from an LFD or PCR test. In any of these incidences, they must stay at home and isolate. Individuals identified as close contacts are no longer required to self-isolate if any of the following apply:

- they are **fully vaccinated** (e.g. at least 2 weeks after second dose)
- they are below the age of **18 years and 6 months**
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Close contacts who are not required to isolate will be advised to:

- take a **PCR** test (do not need to isolate whilst awaiting result but will need to isolate as a case if positive)
- **limit close contact** with others outside their household
- wear a **face covering** in enclosed spaces
- limit contact with **clinically extremely vulnerable**
- participate in twice weekly **LFD** testing if eligible

We have updated our risk assessment and it is available to view on our website under the 'Safeguarding' tab on the front page.

What remains vital are following the basic hygiene practices that we have all become familiar with over the last eighteen months. We will be continuing to ask pupils to sanitise on arrival in school and when entering each classroom. We will continue to wipe down desks and equipment and avoid the mixing of equipment between pupils as much as possible. We will keep all areas as well ventilated as we reasonably can.

Mask wearing is no longer being recommended in most settings or schools. **However, due to the number of cases locally, Devon and Cornwall have been made an Enhanced Response Area (ERA).** This is for the next five weeks but will be reviewed in four weeks and **for at least the first two weeks of term all staff, pupils and visitors are requested to wear masks in communal areas including corridors.** Pupils can remove these when sat down in classrooms but they may keep them on if they wish to do so.

There is a lot of speculation about vaccinations for young people aged 12 and over but there are no plans for this to happen yet. The most important assistance that you as parents/carers can give is to continue to ensure that your children conduct lateral flow device (LFD) tests at least twice a week.

## LFD Testing

Please can you ensure that your child takes an LFD test on the evening of Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> or first thing on the morning of Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September. We are running tests in school on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September for Year 7 pupils and if your child needs assistance, they could come into school where we can provide this. Please contact me directly if you would like to take up this offer.

LFD test packs are now widely available. However, if you are struggling to get some please ring our Reception from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September and come into school to collect. Alternatively, you can order packs online at: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>.

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We strongly recommend and request that you continue to get your child to LFD test at least twice a week - on Sunday and Wednesday evenings makes the most sense. Pupils must stay at home if they have symptoms and would then need to PCR test as soon as possible. I know it's obvious but the more that we can keep the virus out of our school, the more we can ensure everyone's safety and get everyone's education back on track! Thank you again for your support with this.

We will be in touch again in the first few weeks with details of what's coming up this term but please get in touch if you have questions or concerns. We're really looking forward to having pupils return to school this next week, to getting things back to a new form of normal and to being able to really drive our school forward.

Best wishes



James O'Connell  
Principal