

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you all well.

You will no doubt have seen this week's media coverage about the phased re-opening of schools. We have been delighted to start seeing more of our pupils over the last few weeks and to be bringing them back in a very controlled way, which is as safe as it can be. However, I think it is fair to say that there has been some frustration voiced in the media that not all children and young people will have the opportunity to come into school before the summer holidays. In terms of our HAT community, we know that parents and carers, and children and young people in the year groups NOT being offered some in-person teaching may be very disappointed.

I wanted to take the opportunity to share what our plans are for the next few weeks and explain the rationale for them.

The wider re-opening of schools – our operations for the next few weeks

Primary Years

As requested by the government, in the week beginning 1 June we started to take back children in specific year groups. We currently have 'bubbles' operating in Reception and Year 1, and on Monday 15 June we will be opening 'bubbles' of Year 6 pupils. Throughout the national crisis, we have been open to the children of essential workers and vulnerable children.

The government guidelines for primary schools mean that children must be taught in fixed groups or 'bubbles', where the same staff work with the same small group of children. This links to the principles of effective infection control and the aim of implementing 'track and trace'. We believe this has been a safe approach to the return of younger children, who find it hard to maintain a social distance of two metres. A disadvantage of this approach is that it means that the school staffing ratios and rooms cannot accommodate anything like our normal number of learners. What this means in practical terms is that we are not able to offer children in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 in-person teaching this term. We have accommodated those parents who have requested a place for their child in the year groups prioritised by the government: Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Should demand rise further in the next few weeks we might get to a point where we cannot admit any more children in those year groups, because we have reached the maximum number of 'bubbles' the school can staff.

We were not surprised by the announcement this week that there would now not be an expectation that other primary year groups would return in June/July. The current safety regulations mean that all of the children cannot be accommodated on the site at the same time. This situation is the same in every primary school in the country.

Year 10 and Year 12

The situation in secondary years is similar in that the government has prioritised Years 10 and 12 to have contact with their teachers this term. There is a real logic to this choice, in that these are the year groups that will have public examinations next school year. Again, this means that if your child is in Year 7, 8 and 9 there are no plans to resume in-person teaching this term. It also means that students in Year 13 and Year 11 had an abrupt, unscheduled end to their courses in March this year, which we know will have been incredibly difficult for them/you.

From 15 June Year 10 students have been invited in for individual appointments in school. From 22 June, they have been offered some face-to-face teaching in small groups. Year 12 will have some tutor contact and support with UCAS applications from 15 June and will resume some small group teaching from 22 June. We have taken the additional safety measure of moving all Year 12 in-person contact to the Hampton Gardens site this term. This enables us to allocate rooms for the sole use of Year 12, in a part of the building completely separated from the HG students/staff. Year 10 and 12 students are not in a strict 'bubble' like the primary years, but are only in on certain days, in the same small 'house population', and will be adhering to social distancing.

What will happen in September?

We do not yet know what the national plans are for schools in England in the autumn. As soon as we have any firm communication about this we will be sharing it with you. We very much hope that in the coming weeks we will be in a position to share information with you. We recognise how difficult this is for families, when you need certainty, and just want to be able to plan. We also recognise the particular pressures for families where your children are in year groups which have not had the option of returning to school this term.

I am sure that all of us agree that the ideal scenario would be a full return of all students in September. However, whether that is a realistic option depends upon the public health situation in the coming months and the safety guidance issued to schools. There has been much talk in recent weeks of the 'new normal'. I am sure many of us would just like our old normal back! We look forward to a time, hopefully in the not too distant future, when our operations are at least recognisable as some kind of normal. In the meantime, I can assure you that we are doing everything in our power to plan for a range of scenarios, to be able to support your child's education.

Helen Price

Executive Headteacher