

12 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

The new term at Weald has so far seen amazing attendance figures and students behaving respectfully towards staff and each other. We are so proud of our students and you, as parents and carers, should be proud also.

You should now be aware of measures taken to enable the school to fully reopen. Additionally, we recently introduced the following measures to ensure we're doing all we can to mitigate the risks as we see them.

- A change in our guidance in relation to face coverings, we now strongly recommend these are worn in communal areas. To avoid any confusion, we mean all areas outside of classrooms from the point that students and staff enter the school gate. Also, for clarity, this remains a strong recommendation rather than a rule at this stage.
- More signage to help the steady flow of students throughout school buildings.
- Water fountains on both campuses have been shut off to limit transmission risks to students. However, additional water dispensers have been ordered for both campuses to help meet demand. Water is available all day at bubble food collection points.
- Designated toilet blocks are clearly labelled.
- We have opened the vehicle gate on the Tonbridge campus to help alleviate congestion at the end of the school day.
- No vehicle access from the Tonbridge site until 4pm from the Sports Hall Car Park
- More staff are on duty at lunchtimes to help ensure students maintain social distancing.
- Students are directed to food collection points at Tonbridge each morning, if they arrive before 8.30am.
- Sevenoaks students are being directed straight to class when they arrive in the morning, to ensure no queuing outside classrooms.

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In addition to these measures, from Monday we will be allowing Key Stage 3 students to leave school five minutes before the rest of the school are dismissed. Whilst we are confident that bubbles are working well within the school site, we hope this extra measure will alleviate potential issues outside of the school. In making this decision we are very mindful of the large number of students who have long journeys and limited travel options. At this time, we are not intending to make any changes to the start of the school day, as the arrival to school is fairly well staggered by the nature of train and bus arrival times.

Additionally, staff on duty are reminding students not to mix with students from other schools whilst waiting for buses at the bus stops and whilst walking home. It would be helpful if you could also have these conversations. We do understand that it is difficult for students who are having to distance themselves from their friends at the moment and appreciate they are excited to see their peers again.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to urge parents and carers, who collect students from areas around the Tonbridge Campus, to use town centre parking facilities where possible. We have been contacted by residents and local business owners raising concerns about parents dropping off and collecting students. We understand, of course, that the current situation will inevitably see more students travelling to school by car. However, we also need to be mindful of our neighbours. If you do elect to continue using The Vauxhall Inn on Vauxhall Lane, Tonbridge, to collect your child, please use the large car park at the rear of the business. I must also insist that parents and carers stop using the bus layby as a collection point or car park. This is creating significant issues for bus drivers, preventing buses leaving and entering the layby and therefore significantly impacting social distancing measures in this area.

For parents and carers collecting from our Sevenoaks campus, I share your dismay that the roadworks taking place have been timed to coincide with the return to school. We are hoping they will be completed soon, allowing the drop off and collection points to return to a manageable flow of traffic. As with Tonbridge, if you are able to arrange collection of students away from the immediate area of the school, this will greatly aid the easing of congestion.

We will also be moving the food collection point for Year 10 from the covered area outside the hall to the hut that's home to Student Services. This change will happen on Monday. Students will be informed via form tutors. We are able to do this now because we have completed the relocation of Student Services to a new, specially designed space inside the main building. I will be sharing images of the new space, as well as our new changing rooms and the progress of our new science block, with you next week.

I have been asked today what actions the school will take in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19. We will follow the guidance issued to schools, which I have included below for reference. However, the school will not respond to suspected cases whilst awaiting results, as per the most recent guidance from government.

It includes: "Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the school – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

"The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

"The health protection team will work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive,

advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- *Direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)*
- *Proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual*
- *Travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person.”*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their support and efforts to return Weald to as close to normal as possible. It has been a real pleasure to see students engaged in learning in and around the school. Lastly from me, a huge thank you to the staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure all of our students have a positive experience at this time. It is their dedication to the young people in their care that makes the difference at times like this.

Have a lovely weekend and do take care.

Mrs Bone

Headteacher