

Wednesday 26th August 2020

Dear Parents,

The school site is a very busy place at the moment. Furniture is being moved to create space in classrooms, every room and surface is being given a thorough clean, new washing facilities are being installed and there are lessons and activities taking place for many of those on the Pre-Sessional and Quarantine courses. I cannot tell you how good it is to see the School site coming back to life again. It is a stark reminder that schools are not about buildings, they are most definitely about people and it will be great to have the whole community back together again soon.

In The Times newspaper on Saturday, Rachel Carlyle pulled together a series of discussion points aimed at helping your sons and daughters to transition back into school life again. I thought they were helpful and worth sharing with those who may have missed them. Here they are, in brief, together with a short comment from me.

1. *“Don’t pretend that school will look or feel the same – it’s important they know what to expect.”*

To be honest, school never feels the same in the first few weeks of the school year. About one quarter of the school is new every year; being in Year 12 is not the same as being in Year 11; new tutors, new coaches, new classmates; brand new initiatives the school has come up with. Some things have to be different, but the core remains the same.

2. *“Even older children may worry about being away from you.”*

I think this important to acknowledge, even if your son or daughter may not say it to you. We sometimes see that week 3 is a time for a natural dip. The excitement and newness has faded and your son or daughter may miss their lockdown life a little.

3. *“Expect to see behaviour changes even in children who can’t wait to get back to school.”*

Everyone prepares for a forthcoming change differently but recognising that this is likely to have an impact on us all will help.

4. *“No more 11pm bedtimes and unlimited screens.”*

It’s been nearly 6 months since we were last in normal school routines. Preparing for what has been described as “social jet lag” would be wise.

5. *“Their social skills might be rusty.”*

My preference is to meet with people in small groups or one to one. I am not at my best in a large party. As a result social distancing has worked well for me and, I

suspect, for some of your sons and daughters too. Preparing to be back in a room with 17 or 18 other people and sharing jokes in a group setting is going to be an adjustment for us all. Meeting up with a couple of others, even on a video call, in the next few days may help with this adjustment.

6. “Don’t beat yourself up if they’ve fallen behind.”

The key here is that we have time but it would be good if the next week involved some reading and writing for all, just to get the heads and hands moving again. The school’s focus will be to identify the gaps that may have appeared during lock down and to respond to them. With class time, homework and clinics, we are confident that we can add to all that took place last term.

7. “They may miss the freedom they’ve had.”

There is always some individual freedom that is sacrificed when you are part of a community. For some this will be a tough adjustment, it may play out at home and I suspect that there will be some very tired individuals by the end of the second week. We will find our rhythm but getting up to speed is going to be an effort.

Returning to the school site after a gap of nearly 6 months is brand new ground for us all. I hope that Rachel Carlyle’s discussion points are helpful to you and that the collected Questions and Answers add some specific detail to the briefing papers that we are sending out.

In addition to this, every House will be holding a Zoom meeting with its members next week and **all parents are invited to a Webinar led by me and members of the Senior Leadership Team. This will take place on Thursday 3rd September at 7pm.** Links to all of these sessions will be sent out early next week.

The next few pages are a collection of all of the questions that have come through over the last couple of days. It has been incredibly helpful to receive these questions and I hope that the answers are useful to you and your sons and daughters.

The full pastoral briefing will be out next week with the academic briefing due on Friday, as advertised.

Yours faithfully,

Bradley Salisbury
Headmaster

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Dean Close School Re-Opening Questions and Answers - Part One

Logistics

Regarding the Co-Ed day houses & changing facilities & toilet use. How will these be safely and sensitively managed between male & female pupils?

We are fortunate to have a large number of changing rooms on the DCS site. All day pupils will be allocated to one of these. Due to the lack of fixtures with other schools, we have more space available than normal. Boarders will be able to change in their houses.

Will we be allowed to mix and speak to other year groups if we socially distance?

This will be much more limited than normal. We will start the term with a focus on creating social opportunities within the bubbles and see how things develop.

Where are the boarders going to be dropped off? At their new house or old/current?

All pupils will go straight to their house for this term. This is their base for now.

What will happen with people's belongings that were left behind? Will we have to collect them at their original house?

This will all have been packed up and moved to their new room.

Are boarders still allowed to go into town or Tesco?

Yes, but there will be limits on the size of the group so that we can make sure we are fully supporting the local community by not putting them at risk. Face masks will be required in all shops.

Please could you explain the policy of face masks outside when moving between buildings?

Our simple guidance of *Stand Up, Cover Up* is an effort to make the guidance simple for pupils to follow. Within a school day there are many different situations that our pupils and staff find themselves in and we want to keep things as straightforward as possible. Our experience is that some people find it extremely difficult to socially distance themselves from one another, and as such we are seeking to reduce the chances of infection by encouraging face coverings when moving around the school during the most congested times of the day and when we are encountering people from different bubbles.

Do the masks have to be a certain colour or are we allowed patterns?

The most important thing is that everyone wears a face covering when required to do so. We are not insisting on a certain colour or design. Any masks that are in bad taste will be removed and a replacement sought.

You ask for 5 face masks – is the intention that pupils have to use 5 face masks each day, or one per day for the week?

The intention is that 5 masks should enable each pupil to have a mask when needed. 5 is a guideline that we believe allows for washing, lost masks etc.

“Face coverings will be required when moving around the school in between lessons and activities.” What does it mean by activities?

An activity might be a drama rehearsal or meal. The key message here is that when the site is at its busiest and most people are moving around, we want everyone to feel as safe as possible. Between 8:30am and 4:15pm is the main focus.

Who will wash the face masks? How will this be controlled and monitored and cross contamination controlled?

Boarding pupils will have the option of washing their own masks, making use of the house washing machines, or using the school laundry service. The house matrons will be able to advise as to which is most appropriate.

What is the face mask wearing protocol for the children within their own boarding house?

Within the bubble of a boarding or day house, the wearing of face masks is optional.

How will it be ensured that boarding children are regularly changing their face masks and putting used ones through the wash?

There will be regular reminders in House and the matrons will play a significant role here. There is also a need for some personal discipline and for all pupils, boarding and day, to recognise the responsibility they have to ensure their face masks are not putting themselves or others at risk.

Will boarders have to bring their own utensils and mugs or still share with the rest of the house?

Our expectation is that shared utensils can be used. It will be important that whoever is on washing up duty, understands the importance of their role. Any pupils who would prefer to use their own utensils etc. are more than welcome to do so.

Are boarders still allowed home on weekends and for flexis during the week?

Yes

Where do the boarders who are further away from the school [eg. Turner (Pine) House and Fawley (Lime) House] go for break times?

Pine House and Lime House will be able to use their Day Rooms, as normal. Lime House day room has been extended. Oak House (Shelburne) will need to plan how best to use the Day Room.

What do pupils do for the 10 minutes between each lesson? If rooms are being cleaned, they cannot spend any of that time in either classroom, and will have to spend the 10 minutes outside/in transit. As winter approaches, this could be quite cold/wet and they could find ways of huddling together too close in groups under cover.

If a classroom is ready, the class will be invited to come in and the lesson can start. It does not necessarily require the full 10 minutes. We are fortunate to have both wide corridors and covered areas under which to shelter. We have explored locations for temporary marquees if they are needed and this will be kept under review.

Previous emails advised that school sports wear was to be worn during the day but now it is uniform, why the change?

DCPS are going to be starting the school year with pupils in sportswear. This is appropriate for the age of the pupils concerned. Since the publication of the guidance for secondary schools, DCS has committed to a return to normal uniform.

I am a little confused as to the party authorisation part, not that I would allow my child to attend a party in breach of government guidelines but should this not be a parent/school discussion?

When an activity breaches a government guideline or law, we see it is part of our duty when acting in loco parentis, to make these decisions independently. Where things are ambiguous, we would always get in contact with parents.

Pastoral & Health

Will boarders in 5th and 6th still have their own rooms?

All full boarders in the Sixth Form and the majority in the Fifth form will continue to have their own rooms.

Will the different boarding houses have to be in the same room, for instance will Fawley get to stay together dorm wise?

Room allocation will be decided by individual Housemasters / Housemistresses. It is not a requirement for normal house groups to be kept. These decisions will all be made on pastoral grounds.

Will houses like Shelburne (Oak) and Fawley (Lime) have a chance to meet and talk with their new housemistress?

We're looking into this at the moment. Our aim is to arrange a Zoom meeting to give all pupils a chance to hear from their new Housemaster or Housemistress and to ask questions.

Prior to Summer closure the pupils spent quite a few calls getting to both know and build a working relationship with their new house master, this has now all changed with only weeks to go and they are now going in "cold" to a completely different environment, how is this to be managed?

See above

Dorm wise, are we still allowed to decorate our dorms or do we have to minimize the amount of materials in our room?

Materials that are in your own space such as photos and posters are encouraged.

What will the symptoms check entail as it is identified that temperature alone can give false positives as many ailments can generate an increase in temperature.

The temperature check will flag up a conversation, after which we will consult with the School Doctor and, if necessary, move to a test to confirm the situation.

If isolated will boarders be tested and who will authorise this procedure? Will this be discussed with parents prior to it occurring as per normal medical processes?

Yes, parents will be consulted before any test.

Given the necessary constraints needed to reopen the school and have pupils in I could not see anything with regards to additional Pastoral care especially in regards to the known Mental Health impacts such restraints have on adults let alone children separated from home?

This will be covered in the pastoral briefing that will follow in the coming days.

What are the planned procedures for the children who have been in contact if a positive case is confirmed within the school:

- a. Of a teacher?
- b. Of a pupil in the same bubble?
- c. Of a pupil within the same year group, if different to b?

The school's first act will be to contact the local health protection team and to follow their advice. According to the latest Government guidance, anyone who has been in close contact with someone who

has tested positive will be required to self-isolate for 14 days. Close contact is defined as:

- *“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”*

This highlights the need for our year group bubbles, for seating plans within that bubble, for teachers to effectively socially distance and our encouragement of alternative forms of transport to lift sharing.

What is an example of how a non-exeat weekend will operate for children who want/need to remain within school? Are planned trips outside of school still possible?

We are still in the planning process for our weekend activities programme but we are not currently planning for any large group trips on a Sunday. Our site, however, does enable us to offer a wide range of activities and we will be fully exploiting all that we have here.

What opportunity will we, as new parents, have to connect with other parents? e.g. will the school facilitate a social network?

Naturally, our priority has been to focus on providing as full an education as possible for our pupils. However, we recognise the significantly positive impact on pupils when parents are able to socialise and support one another. We are planning remote teacher/parent meetings for this term but would welcome any ideas that parents have that would help us to build remote parent communities, to build the kind of relationships that normally develop at drop off and pick up, on the sides of matches, at concerts etc. We will be there again, but in the meantime we would benefit from some creative ideas to add to our own initial thinking.

Academic

Will day pupils and boarders be sat apart/separated during lessons?

Day pupils and boarders will not be in separate lessons but seating plans within classrooms will be set around the groups that we have identified.

Could you please tell about writing pads/file folder etc. needed in the stationery department?

Pupils will not be able to borrow equipment from other pupils in lessons so will need to make sure they have the following (as appropriate for their lesson):

- Charged laptop/tablet computer
- Pen
- Pencil
- Sharpener
- Rubber
- Ruler
- Colouring pencils
- Maths equipment as needed (set square, protractor, compass etc.)

At the start of the term, the teacher will provide folders, exercise books and lined paper for each class.

Co-Curricular (Activities, Drama, Music, Sport etc.)

How will sports/games work or happen?

The full detail will be provided in the Co-Curriculum briefing.

Will the school offer normal hockey training and will matches go ahead as scheduled?

Hockey training will take place but we will not be able to play matches against other schools for at least the first three weeks and maybe longer.

Are there still plans for sports fixtures to take place on a Saturday or will the children be free after lessons have finished?

For the first few weeks of the term, there will be no fixtures against other schools. We will, however, be running a full games programme on a Saturday afternoon. The length of the session will vary in line with the activity and timings will be communicated during the week.

Will there be any music groups e.g. orchestra?

We are still looking at the latest research and guidance to see what will be possible.

Will music lessons take place in person?

Yes. Every music teacher will have a Perspex screen to teach behind. Particular care will be taken with singing, brass and woodwind lessons.