



11 August 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

This is simply a short letter to 'touch base' and let you know a little about where our planning is currently. A number of people have been working more or less full time on this during the last month, and there is a lot of detail behind the 'headline' messaging, but I will keep things brief for now. On 24 August, we expect to have a full re-opening document available for all families. The picture moves quite quickly, and there is plenty of misinformation around, not helped by the newspapers finding daily unhelpful quotes (easy to find!). So, in summary:

Boarders: those boarders needing quarantine will start to return to the UK on 17 August and many have taken the option of serving that quarantine period at school. To help with this, and with any subsequent cases requiring isolation over the coming months, we have re-opened what used to be the 'Bedford School Study Centre' and (before that) Kirkman's House, which is situated at 67 de Parys' Avenue at the North West corner of the site. The building has been mothballed for four years, and, although it has required some touching up, is in remarkably good condition. We do not know, of course, for how long we will need it, but in its current form it will be known as George Godber House, named after an Old Bedfordian who played a role in the setting up of the NHS, and was Chief Medical Officer for England from 1960-1973. Its Housemaster will be our Senior Boarding Housemaster, Mr Chris Bury; its Assistant Housemaster will be Mr Keith Thomson; and there will be a full pastoral team alongside them.

Re-opening: we are fully expecting to re-open the whole school on 2 September. Risk Assessments, protocols and school rules (all almost complete now, though all will necessarily retain some fluidity) will all comply with and, where suitable, exceed Government Guidelines in their safety requirements. Governors, meeting after a Health and Safety Committee sub-committee meeting over the weekend, have already approved the re-opening of boarding houses; they will meet again on 22 August to scrutinise the whole school plans (risk assessments etc.) before the Harpur Trust trustees approve the re-opening of all of their schools, which is on track for the end of August.

Computers: please note that those plans will include thought over the safety of computers which boys are bringing to school next term. However, looking after them is ultimately the boys' responsibility (as it is with expensive mobile phones, which also abound); and we will stress the importance of this, as well as how to do so, upon the boys' return. Insurance for such items will need to be covered by home contents insurance. It may be reassuring to know that plenty of boys already have computers at school successfully and without issue.

Broad approach for next term: we will be operating a zonal approach to (most) lessons next term in order to keep the year groups in their own 'bubbles' as guided by the

Government. We will be reliant upon parents to refrain from sending sons to school who are not feeling well; and we will be discouraging public transport (though recognise that for some, and with suitable protection, this is a necessary mode of transportation). Once on site, hygiene measures will be extremely strong, social distancing will be maintained so far as is possible in our environment and we will be restricting areas of the school to year groups (the 'zonal' approach) to reduce contact between bubbles. Good discipline will be even more important than ever (and a joint responsibility of staff, boys and parents). Large gatherings (e.g. assemblies, house meetings etc.) will only be able to take place online. Visitors (including parents) will only be allowed onsite if they are on essential business, and even then only if pre-booked.

Summary: well, more of an interim summary, really...next term will be very different to life at school this time last year. However, we are fully committed to providing excellent, holistic and inclusive education and we are determined not to lose sight of that under a pile of regulation. We are also extremely aware that many boys have not been in school, and some not even in the country, for a long time, and will return with a variety of experiences under their belts; we are committed to looking after them all well pastorally. So we are very much looking forward to having the boys back with us; and we will do all we can to maintain our high educational standards alongside our clear need to safeguard the wellbeing of all who work and learn here.

Lastly for now: good luck to those who receive academic results in the next fortnight. This week, we will be focussing largely upon university entrance and Mr Baldock wrote in detail last week to all those expecting A Level results; we have, of course, the uncertainty of uncharted waters this week, but we also have the confidence that previous year groups have almost entirely found good courses at good universities either on results day itself or in the 48 hours following. I wish our departing Upper Sixth boys, who have been so wonderful, similar success. Next week, we will turn to GCSEs and Sixth Form courses. Both year groups will, in the main, receive results and advice remotely this year; and we have a team at school ready to provide the best possible support.

I do hope that you are all managing to get something of a summer. Do please let us know of any fun/exciting/interesting news as/when it arises; we so enjoyed the stories that came back to school from home during lockdown. Likewise, if there are particular pastoral issues of which we need to be aware, please do let your son's tutor/housemaster know before term starts.

With kind regards indeed

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Hodgson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James Hodgson
HEAD MASTER