

Date: 21/07/2021

Dear parent/carer,

Not only are we almost at the end of another academic year, but also, we hope, at the end of huge disruption to schools and to your child's education. The last 16 months have been difficult for us all, but we simply cannot underestimate the impact that the pandemic has had on our young people.

However, we can now look forward to much more normality within all of our schools from September, ensuring all pupils receive what they need to continue their educational journey with success. You will be aware that the government is funding schools to deliver summer schools and recovery programmes and I can assure you that our plans for these are robust and in place. We are very much looking forward to meeting our new Y7 pupils at the summer school held at Airedale Academy from Monday 26th to Friday 30th July.

The most recent announcement regarding Step 4 represents a significant relaxation in the Covid controls that schools have to follow. From 16 August, children who are close contacts of positive Covid cases will no longer be required to self-isolate and this will remove the main reason for current Covid-related pupil absence from our schools as we move in to the new academic year. They will instead be advised to take a PCR test. Close contacts will still need to be identified and contacted, but from 19 July this responsibility will move from schools and colleges to NHS Test and Trace.

When our pupils return to school after the summer break, the scrapping of bubbles will remove some of the current barriers to offering them their full timetable of lessons, and we very much hope that the autumn term and its' routines will feel much more settled and familiar.

The start of the autumn term in September will therefore look very normal for all of our schools. More detailed information regarding this will be sent to you at a later date from each school, outlining their plans and expectations, including the arrangements for lateral flow testing on site for Airedale Academy students on their return to school.

It is important to note though, that a system of controls will remain in place, including the flexibility to reintroduce more stringent measures in the event of local outbreaks of coronavirus. The progress of the virus will need to be closely monitored in the autumn term and probably beyond, but we sincerely hope that the new academic year will see a much more settled educational experience for all of our pupils.

I cannot stress enough the importance of continued lateral flow testing at home for all secondary aged children once they are back at school in September (this is not a requirement for primary aged children), as well as the importance of the vaccination programme for those eligible. If we can do anything to support the fight against Covid-19 and more importantly, to protect ourselves against it, then as a community we absolutely should. Our staff will also receive this important message and will be expected to continue with their home testing.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you yet again for your support throughout what has been a very trying time for all of us. Please never underestimate how much this means to us all. I hope you all have a restful and safe summer break and we look forward to welcoming your children back to school on Tuesday 7th September.

Yours faithfully



Elizabeth Fairhurst
CEO