



17 September 2020

Dear Families

### Welcome back

We hope that all is well with you. We hope too that you are pleased with how the start of term has gone for your children. We've been delighted to see the students back again. Attendance has been positive with an average of 93% across our schools so far this term. We will continue to do all that we can to keep the children and our staff safe. We are very grateful to the headteachers and the wider school teams for all they've done to get things ready for the start of the year.

A belated congratulations to Dunraven's GCSE and A level students who overcame the challenge of 'lockdown' to achieve, what would be in different circumstances, *record* results. The very best of luck to them in the next phase of their educational journey from starting Year 12 to gaining an apprenticeship to taking up a place at Oxford or Cambridge. You can find out more [here](#) and [here](#). We also wish the very best of luck to last year's Year 6 cohorts in their new secondary schools (including, of course, Dunraven). We hope that Year 7 is much more straightforward than the second half of Year 6 turned out to be.

### Parent Forums

Thank you to all those families who joined us for one of the online discussions we held at the start of the summer break. We covered a range of issues including the response to the Black Lives Matter movement. We found it both interesting and helpful to hear directly from you. We were heartened by the range of positive feedback about the school experience for our young people and grateful to hear the things that we might do better in the future.

The key themes that emerged across all the sessions included: the importance for your children of being part of a richly diverse school community and therefore the critical value of a diverse workforce; having a high quality curriculum which also reflects the lives of our young people and their heritage; the consistency of the school experience for young people and how this is communicated to you as families; the effectiveness of online provision for children at home; engaging with you as families in ways other than formal parents evenings.

These key points have been discussed with the headteachers and will be shared with Trustees as well as governors on the local boards. None of the issues are 'quick fixes' and will take some time to progress. We will host another round of meetings later in the term as a means of hearing from you directly.

### The term ahead

We think that it is safe to say that we don't quite know what this term may have in store for us but it's highly likely that it may contain some challenges. It may well mean older students working from home once more so it is vital that schools know if you have any difficulties in accessing the internet and/or a device to work on at home. The government plans should the virus worsen focus mainly on secondary aged students working from home either part or full time. In the event of total lockdown all children would once again learn at home. We'd ask families with children in **Dunraven's secondary phase in particular** to let the school know **now** if there is any issue related to learning online at home.

Meetings will be virtual wherever possible (e.g. parents evenings or information events) and we hope that you will understand why this is necessary. Please let me know if there are other ways that we might better help you support your child's learning.

## Safety first

Given that the number of cases of the virus locally is rising, along with further changes to public gatherings, it seems clear that we need to do more if we are to keep those at risk in school safe and therefore better able to support our young people. The guidance from the government for schools about safety has been, some would say, a little inconsistent. There are already changes to the national rules about social distancing since the term began and more are likely as we move into the colder, darker days of autumn. Therefore, we will need to make our own decisions now rather than wait for others to catch up with the reality of the situation and challenge for those in schools. We want to support those young people and staff who are concerned about their older relatives, for example, or those with conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to infection. We are pleased that our precautions have proved successful thus far in keeping the virus away from our schools; we want to ensure that this continues for as long as possible within the Trust.

With this in mind, we have decided on the following changes. From Monday 21 September, we ask that students and staff in the **secondary** school wear a face covering whilst on site in communal areas (e.g. corridors, dining room). Where students have a pre-existing condition which means wearing a face covering is not possible, families will need to confirm and agree this with the school's headteacher. Staff in primary schools will be asked to wear a face covering in communal areas. Primary aged children will not be expected to wear face coverings in school for all the reasons of which you will be well aware. We are told that children under 12 are less likely to transmit the virus and if they contract it are less likely to suffer severe symptoms. We would also ask that parents wear face coverings at congested times (e.g. at drop off/pick up) to support our staff.

**Face coverings are not yet required in the classroom** but staff may wear a visor if they wish to do so. This is to add a layer of protection in situations where it is simply not possible to maintain full social distancing (e.g. almost every classroom in almost every school). We would ask that you discuss this with your child to help them understand the part they have to play in keeping others safe. Along with the other key elements of COVID-19 hygiene (washing hands, keeping distance), we hope that this will further reduce the risk of infection in our schools. A reminder that you can find the risk assessment for your child's school, along with a short summary of key points [here](#).

**Please remember** that parents should *only* come to the school office in an emergency or for a pre-arranged appointment. It is important that we maintain the security of our school 'bubbles' at all times. The vast majority of families in each school are aware of this and we thank you for your support.

We understand that this is a sensitive issue and it is unlikely that this position will meet everyone's needs. However, we must do what we believe is right for the largest majority to keep as many as possible safe and well.

Yours sincerely



Helen George  
Chair



David Boyle  
CEO