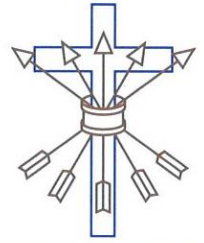


WADDESDON CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

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Headteacher: **Matthew Abbott**



Monday 6th July

Dear Parents/Carers,

On Thursday last week the Department for Education published guidance for schools, outlining their plans for September. The Government expects that all children and young people will return to full-time education in the new academic year. They are requiring all schools to put in place measures to enable this to happen.

The key elements of the guidance are as follows:

- to lift current restrictions on group sizes to allow schools to reopen fully to all children and young people as COVID-19 infection rates continue to fall;
- to keep students in class or year group sized 'bubbles' and to encourage older children and staff to keep their distance from each other where possible;
- to ensure testing occurs if staff, students or their families develop COVID-19 symptoms;
- to increase the frequency of cleaning and minimise contact in corridors and around the school site;
- to take appropriate action where there is a positive case in a school or college.

The DfE guidance requires a significant re-thinking on the part of young people, families and schools. A succinct way of viewing the guidance is to consider that schools are now being asked to reintroduce as much as possible "education as usual", with additional precautions to make this as safe as possible. Amongst other things, these are likely to include changes to the start of the term, assembly, movement between lessons, break and lunchtime routines and travel to and from school.

As we have done throughout this period, we will continue to communicate to you our risk assessment, plans and procedures in the firm desire to provide the best education for your child(ren). It is of utmost importance to me that we do this while providing effective and practical safety measures for our young people, their families and the staff who work at Waddesdon.

With regard to the staff at Waddesdon, one of the more challenging aspects of the guidance is that all teachers and other staff will operate across different bubbles. This is clearly necessary to enable schools, particularly secondary schools, to provide anything like a normal timetable – but it's obviously likely to cause concern to some staff. As you can imagine, we will be working with our staff, especially those who fall into more vulnerable categories, to provide additional protection and support.

In addition, I appreciate that you will inevitably have questions that relate to your own personal circumstances, including specific worries about health risks. During our planning period (over the next 7-10 days), I ask that you hold your questions until we have finalised and published our approach, including our risk assessment. At this point, questions and enquiries will be welcomed. I am keen to work with you to ensure that you are confident about the measures we have taken, and individual concerns allayed as much as possible.

The following extract from the guidance provides advice regarding those who have been shielding or self-isolating:

“We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent.
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at COVID-19 - ‘shielding’ guidance for children and young people.”

I recognise that this continues to be a stressful and worrying time for many families. To end, I would like to remind you of the Irish proverb which I used in the newsletter on 20th April just after the Easter holidays: *“it is in the shelter of each other that the people live.”*

I truly hope that, among the many things that we have learned during this time, we can continue to apply this wise and enduring advice in our communication with, and care for, one another.

I hope that you and your family are well.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Abbott
Headteacher, Waddesdon CE School