

21 August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I wanted to write to you again to explain how the new school year will commence in September. All general letters sent out to parents/carers are posted on the school website so that you can always look back to re-read earlier correspondence (Learning – Communication and Letters).

Exam results days

First, the exam results days ran well with lots of students achieving excellent GCSE and A Level results in line overall with the outstanding results we have come to expect from our students and that reward their hard work and commitment to their learning. Almost all students now have places on the next steps, be that in the Vandyke Sixth Form, at college, on an apprenticeship, employment or a place at university. In a very small number of cases we continue to provide support and guidance until every student has their place confirmed.

Building programme

Progress with the building programme has continued and we expect hand-over on 4 September. The programme is providing further exceptional facilities for students and staff including a beautiful new Sixth Form Centre, 12 fantastic science laboratories and a suite of 10 maths classrooms that sees the end of the temporary accommodation that for so long was our “maths village”! The refurbished areas of the school including extended café, new IT, Design Technology and Media workshops, addition of the netball centre and improved cycle storage complete the project and make the Vandyke Campus a truly wonderful facility to support learning.

Return to full-time school

On 2 July the government published its expectations along with detailed guidance for the full opening of schools in September. The guidance is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

The guidance sets out what it calls the “system of controls” – these are the actions schools must take and are about “prevention” and “response to an infection”. We are asked to minimise contact between groups of students and for students to socially distance within their groups. The government confirmed these expectations last week.

Arrangements for the first week of the new term in September

To help our new Y9 and Y12 students to settle in we will have a phased return to school:

Mon 7 Sept	Y9 only
Tues 8 Sept	Y9 and Y12 only
Weds 9 Sept	Y9 and Y12 only
Thurs 10 Sept	Y9, Y10, Y11 only
Fri	Y9, Y10, Y11 only
Y13 students will have an individual meeting with their tutor on Thursday or Friday – to be advised.	
From Monday 14 September all students will be in school following their full timetable of lessons.	

Students will enter school by the gates into the quad and will be directed to the astro-turf pitch (sports hall if it is a wet day) where they will line up with their tutor group. We will have plenty of staff on hand to direct students to the right place if they forget who their tutor is.

The way we will work to reduce the risk of transmission

A student who feels unwell or shows any of the symptoms of Covid or who is in a household where somebody is unwell with the virus, must stay at home and follow medical advice including having a test. Please keep the school informed about this and any test result.

We will emphasise to students the importance of good hygiene especially thorough hand washing or use of sanitiser, the catch it/bin it/kill it approach to coughs and sniffles, and keeping hands away from the face. For example, students will be asked to use the hand sanitiser station at the entry point to every classroom.

We follow government guidance and, using this as our starting point, we have worked out a careful plan to keep students in different year groups separate while teaching the full curriculum.

Students will have most of their lessons in their year group zone and will spend their break times in a year group zone thus minimising mixing of students between year groups. Students will be expected to avoid close contact with others wherever possible.

Staggered start and finish to the school day

To avoid large numbers of students arriving or leaving school at the same time, we will have staggered start and finish times:

	Start time	Finish time
Y9	8.45am	2.45pm
Y10	8.45am	2.55pm
Y11	9.05am	3.05pm
Y12	9.05am	3.05pm
Y13	9.05am	3.05pm

School transport

We would encourage students to walk or cycle to school (we will have lots of new secure cycle storage space) or to come by car with a parent/carer. Punctuality to school is important but we ask that students do not arrive too early.

Where students need to come by bus, we are in contact with Central Beds Council about arrangements on their buses and are working with the bus companies on the arrangements for Vandyke-run buses. Buses are expected to run as usual with expectations to include use of hand sanitiser on boarding, wearing of a face mask and separate seating areas depending on configuration of vehicle.

Central Beds Council will be in contact with parents/carers directly as to their arrangements and we will be in contact again shortly where you have indicated that you would like a seat on a bus that Vandyke will be operating.

Food/ drink

When students first return in September we will not open the café, so students should bring a packed lunch. Students entitled to free school meals will be provided with a packed lunch.

Students should bring a water bottle. We have some opportunities around the school for filling up water bottles and we are installing more over the summer, but we do not want to encourage queuing, so where possible students should try to bring enough water for the day.

Equipment

We want to minimise the sharing of equipment. Where equipment, such as computer keyboards, are shared, they will be cleaned in between use. However, students must bring to school a pen, pencil, ruler and calculator as the minimum requirement. Marker pens and a glue sticks are among other useful items that will avoid having to share.

Behaviour

Due to the restrictions on use of space within the school buildings, the requirement to minimise interactions between students from different year groups, and the increased pressure on staff, it will not always be possible to maintain the usual responses to behaviour management if students do not follow the school rules and staff instructions. For example, we will not be able to provide the same space or cater for the previous number of students in our Achievement Support Centre. We will not be able to operate our system of "safe rooms" due to minimising mixing between year groups.

We expect all Vandyke students to respect the challenges that the current Covid emergency creates for all of us, staff as well as students, and as usual will expect all students to work with us in a spirit of cooperation. I know that in most cases this will be seen in students' positive behaviour. However, where this is not the case, I must inform you that the threshold for an exclusion will be lower than usual because we will not be able to support poor behaviour in our usual manner. Students will always be given chances

to reflect and to follow staff instructions and to cooperate with us in a positive manner. However, if a student does not follow a reasonable request and continues to cause a disruption and we have no safe location to use to separate the student from the situation, an exclusion from school may be unavoidable in order to keep the school functioning effectively in the interests of everyone's safety. We will continue as always to work with parents/ carers closely to support good behaviour.

Uniform

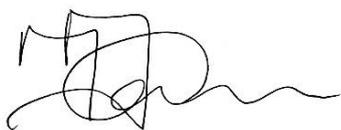
When students return to school they must be wearing their school uniform including appropriate footwear, not trainers. The school's uniform supplier is operating an appointments system and has all uniform items in stock. We enjoy a high standard of uniform and expect all students to wear their Vandyke school uniform so that valuable learning time is not spent on uniform issues. We have added more specific guidance on school trousers and school shoes to the uniform policy. The policy is on the school website, including some photographs as guidance.

All arrangements remain subject to change depending on whether government rules/guidance change and I will continue to keep you updated of any changes. Email to office@vandyke.cbeds.co.uk if you have an enquiry and we will respond as quickly as possible.

We hope of course that these measures will be temporary and that they can be eased as we go through the term. As things stand however, they are unfortunately a necessity and we will need all students to be cooperative and to be respectful of others in working within these new rules.

Recent months have been the strangest of times but we are now excited about the new school year ahead and are looking forward to welcoming students back to school.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Carroll', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending to the right.

Tim Carroll