



23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to commend the students for returning to school in September with such a positive mindset both towards their learning and our new processes and procedures in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic. It is a challenging time for everyone and our desire to keep the students and staff as safe as we possibly can, during this unprecedented time, has been helped enormously by the majority of students who have willingly and cheerfully accepted the 'new normal' at school.

### **Independent Study**

During September we made a conscious decision not to set independent study and not offer extra-curricular activities. We felt that students needed to get used to being in school again, in terms of their own personal routines and organisation. We also recognised that students needed to reacquaint themselves with the high expectations we have of their engagement and participation in learning in school.

In the last couple of weeks, we have begun to set independent study and have at the same time opened up and expanded the Study Zone after school until 4pm as follows: Monday – Year 11; Tuesday – Year 7 and 9; Wednesday – Year 10 and 11; Thursday – Year 7 and 8; Friday – Year 10 and 11. This means students can use a dedicated, quiet space with full access to computers and printers. Some students have also been invited to the Study Support group that is run by Learning Support Assistants after school. We hope that this offer, in addition to your support at home, will enable students to successfully complete their independent study that enhances their learning in school time.

### **After-school provision**

After the October holiday we plan to open up some other activities and opportunities for students, as we know the considerable benefits of extra-curricular provision to the physical, creative, practical and social development of the whole child. We also know that our Year 10 and 11 students in particular, relish the opportunity to have the specialist support of their teachers in their different subjects. You will appreciate also that we need to make sure that the risks to students and staff continue to be minimised as much as possible, so the same health and safety routines will continue during after school activity. If students are staying after school, please do ensure their safe return home and, wherever possible, encourage students to walk or cycle home in line with government guidelines and to not share lifts with others in a different household.

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## **Health and Safety (H&S)**

We have been continually reviewing our H&S practice in school since the start of September and have made some adjustments to our whole school risk assessment. For example, we were concerned that not all students were 'regularly and efficiently washing their hands throughout the day' so we have changed our practice and students now sanitise their hands on entry to every lesson, in addition to when they arrive in school each morning. Students should still wash their hands regularly, but the hand sanitisation adds another layer of protection. The vast majority of students have adapted well to staying within their year group bubble during social time, both indoors and outdoors. We know that this may be difficult for some students to understand, given that some live and maybe socialise together out of school; however we need to reduce the possibility of cross contamination as much as possible during the school day.

We have again considered the use of face masks/coverings in school, in line with Department for Education updates and guidance. We are fortunate in that we are able to have one-way systems throughout all of our buildings and all of our external doors are either entrances or exits. This is not the case in some schools and some schools therefore expect face masks/coverings to be used in communal areas/corridors at lesson changeovers. At this time, we are retaining our line that students and staff may wear masks if they wish to. However, we know that this is a constantly evolving situation and that Covid-19 cases are rising both nationally and locally. On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, we were advised by the Department for Education that if an area is put under 'high' or 'very high' alert, then schools should expect students and staff to wear face masks/coverings when moving indoors i.e. in corridors and in communal indoor areas. **Please therefore ensure that you are fully prepared and that your son/daughter has a face mask/covering ready, which could be used in school immediately, should we suddenly need to change our practice.**

In line with current government guidelines students are required by law to wear a face mask/covering when on a public bus and this remains mandatory and a condition of travel on all other buses that service our school. The majority of students understand this is their responsibility. We would be grateful if you could again remind your son/daughter of this. Students should also be in their allocated year group space on the bus.

A copy of the updated risk assessment is available on our school website (see the link below).

### **Arriving and leaving school:**

As the evenings draw in, please ensure you do not park too close to the school gates, as we need to maximise visibility for students crossing the roads. Please do remind your sons/daughters to walk/cycle sensibly, as visibility for drivers can be low at this time of year. It is particularly important that cyclists wear helmets, have working lights and high visibility clothes/markings on bags etc. Students walking also need to make sure they are visible in poor light.

### **Staffing:**

Miss Kedward started her maternity leave during this term and Mr Luke has taken over her English classes. Mr Luke's enthusiasm for English and reading is evident to all that see him teach and I am sure students will benefit from his teaching. We are delighted that Miss Hoare will be joining us next term. Miss Hoare is an experienced Religious Studies teacher and she will replace Mrs Wilkes who left this term.

### **Student and Staff Absence:**

A reminder that anyone showing any Covid-19 symptoms should NOT attend school and should seek a Covid-19 test, following government guidelines.

It is important parents/carers keep us informed of any tests and results; this will help us manage our school as safely as possible. We really appreciate the way in which families are working with us on this. You may be aware that some local schools have had positive cases that have resulted in students having to self-isolate for 14 days. Whilst we hope that we can avoid this, we are prepared and ready to continue students' learning at home, using 'Blended Learning'. Mr Rome, Assistant Head, has recently sent out information about this to all parents and carers. It is inevitable that staff may also need to be absent from school from time to time. However, unless they are ill, staff will continue to set work for their classes.

**If students are displaying any of the following symptoms, they should NOT attend school:**

- **New and continuous cough**
- **High temperature**
- **Loss or change in sense of taste or smell**

**(Please note:** If a student develops any of the above symptoms whilst in school, parents/carers will be required to collect their son/daughter immediately. Please ensure you always have someone on standby to do this.)

**If students live in the same household as anyone displaying Covid-19 symptoms, they should self-isolate for 14 days.** (Please check current government guidelines at the time).

**Students should follow quarantine rules following any travel abroad – please see government guidelines.**

**Our school website:** [www.maidenhill.gloucs.sch.uk](http://www.maidenhill.gloucs.sch.uk) is a great source of information, not just about our arrangements regarding Covid-19. We have been making a real effort to make sure you can read about your sons'/daughters' successes and achievements. It is an excellent reference point for term dates (now available for 2020-21 and 2021-22), our Parents' and Carers' Handbook, uniform lists and other communications etc. We have recently been reaching out to Year 6 families with links to our 'Virtual Open Evening' and 'Taste of Maidenhill' videos. Please do direct family, friends and neighbours to the website too. You may also like to follow us on Twitter @MaidenhillSch.

I do hope that students will have a good break and return refreshed and healthy on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Thank you for your ongoing support, particularly in these unsettled times.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs P Wilson  
Head Teacher