

13<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parent\Carer

It is such a pleasure to write you with the school once again open and the children safe, happy and back to learning in a classroom.

As I am sure you can imagine, it has been an extraordinarily busy week for the school, as we see all the plans and processes put in place for reopening being put to the test. For the most part, it has been very successful. Students are working well in their year group bubbles, the new schedules are happening and the restart of learning has already begun. I am also pleased with the effectiveness of our pastoral provision which is allowing students to reflect on the extraordinary time they have had since school closure and highlight available avenues of support that some of our students do need.

There have been areas where we have had to rethink. Thus we have changed the entrance and exit for Year 10 students, reviewed the seating arrangements in the Dining Hall and are currently looking at whether the one-way system around the school can be improved. We also know there is work to do to ensure that students get into good routines for maintaining personal hygiene. I am not convinced they are washing their hands as thoroughly or regularly as they should. It is also important that students learn to be more effective at maintaining social distance from each other, particularly on their journeys to and from school. This is further complicated by the government's 'rule of six' that comes into effect from Monday. You may wish to read the guidance from the government on social distancing for young people. Please follow [this link](#) for that information.

We are all getting used to wearing face coverings in the common areas of the school. You may have already received the letter that provides the link if your child is unable to wear a face covering (<http://bit.ly/hwscovering>). We are finding it necessary to hand out a number of facemasks to student who have forgotten their face coverings. Please support your child in being able to remember their coverings each day. We are also getting used to Key Stage 3 students being in their PE kit during the day when they have PE on their timetable so they can avoid changing in and out of their uniform.

With that in mind I need to alert Year 7 families that students will have to bring in their uniform on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September (even if they have PE on that day). This is because the school photographer will be in school to take pictures of our new students, and they will need to be dressed in their school uniform. We will make appropriate arrangements for them to change safely. The photography itself will take place outside, where we are making a shelter to allow it to happen. Our new Post 16 students will also be having their photographs taken on that day.

I am aware that there will be lots of questions, and perhaps some anxieties, around the provision the school has made for the safety and well-being of the children. There are particular concerns about

Highgate Wood School Student Council supports individual action to address the issues of Climate Change and promotes the United Nations top 10 recommendations.



5-minute showers



Drive less



Lights off



Local produce



Recycle



Meat-free meals



Zero-waste fashion



Unplug



Refill and reuse



Bring your own bag

what would happen should someone in the school test positive for Covid-19. I imagine that this will be one of the questions that will be asked at the PSA AGM meeting on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>, to which all parents and carers are invited. The AGM is traditionally held at this time, and I would ordinarily be speaking about our exam results and the successes of our students. I will, of course, still speak about this as we are extremely proud of the achievements of our students from last year, but I do understand that the focus of most families now is not as tied up with exam results as it usually is. This year the PSA AGM will be held as a Zoom Webinar and we will be circulating more information about this at the beginning of next week. In the meantime, please find a reference guide for what you should do if your child or another member of your household develops Covid-19 symptoms. It is important that we are clear on what the systems are.

In summary, if anyone who lives in your household develops a new continuous cough or a high temperature or experiences loss or change to their sense of smell, the government has stated that all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. If this does happen please, contact the school as quickly as possible to let us know. For students in years 7 to 11 call Ms King on the main school absence line, 02083427972. For those in the Sixth Form please call Ms Gordon on 0208 3427978.

If your child develops Covid-19 symptoms at school, we will contact you and ask you to collect them from school as soon as possible. Your child must then be kept off school for 14 days. If you have another child at Highgate Wood School, you will be asked to take them home too and to keep them at home for the same period of time. Any child developing symptoms at school will be asked to wait in a designated isolation room until you collect them. Last week all students received a data form to bring home and check so we know we have the correct contact details on the system, and I would ask you to please ensure this is checked, amended if necessary, and returned as soon as possible.

Please be assured that, along with the staggered times for different year groups, the different entrances being used, the “one-way” systems and the rearrangement of classes and zones, we are being extra vigilant in the way that we clean the school premises and encourage students and staff to maintain the highest levels of hygiene. We are aware that some of the measures will in cause inconvenience to some of our families, but these are unprecedented times, and we must all do everything we can to keep everyone safe and, in particular, protect those members of our community (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) who are most vulnerable to the virus.

One of the other changes that we have made is to stagger break time and lunch times to maintain year group bubbles. Parents and carers should be aware that at break time in particular the turn around is very quick and hence the priority is to provide an opportunity for students to have a quick snack and a chance to go to the toilet. It is not possible for all year groups to have a chance to run around at break time due to the nature of the school site and the need to keep year groups separate. We would like to apologise for this and reassure you that all year groups do have an opportunity to be out and about at lunch time. All schools are facing similar difficulties, and my own children’s school has cancelled break time altogether – something we have been thankfully able to avoid doing. I would also like to remind parents and carers that although food is available at break and lunch times, we are encouraging students to bring a packed lunch wherever possible.

There is no doubt that the changes we have put in place have made Highgate Wood School feel different to normal, but for the vast majority of students it remains a great place to be. It is already clear that the students are very happy to be back, and are also extremely keen to re-engage with classroom learning. We do hope things will continue like this until the current situation passes, but you should be aware that we do have contingency plans should another full or partial school closure

be necessary. We are already aware that a couple of local schools have had cases of Covid and consequently have had to close or partially close for a brief period. With this in mind, our teachers have now started to mirror the work that they are doing in class in the resources being placed in Google Classrooms and we have already begun to familiarise our new students with our online learning systems. We are also reissuing to parents\carers their Show My Homework login codes so they can keep track of homework and the other learning tasks that the students are being set.

Coronavirus has also impacted on another aspect of school, our new “Year ties”. Whilst they did arrive in time for our new Year 7s – and they look extremely smart in them – they have not yet arrived for other years. I do apologise for the inconvenience and confusion that this has caused. We anticipate them arriving in the next few weeks, at which point we will be able to “swap out” students existing House ties with the new ones – at no cost to families. At that time, we will also be asking you to purchase an iron-on House badge, which will become the House identifier. These will cost approximately 50p.

One of the other consequences of the current situation is that more students are now being driven into school. This is perfectly acceptable, and particularly welcomed if it is part of a “car share” but I do request that you park well away from the school gates. We are already getting serious congestion at the Montenotte Road entrance and it is potentially very dangerous. We are currently working with the local authority to impose some traffic management system but, until that is in place, I would request that parents and carers do not come any further down Montenotte Road than the Glasslyn Road turn off.

In the coming term I will be updating families with news of how things are developing at Highgate Wood School, though these will not be weekly letters. I will write to you only when something changes and you need to be informed. In the meantime, however, please be assured that the school website at [www.hws.uk.com](http://www.hws.uk.com) and our twitter feed @highgatewood will be kept up to date with news and information. I also do hope you will be able to attend the PSA AGM webinar on Thursday evening.

With thanks for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Patrick Cozier  
Headteacher