

19th March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach the end of our first full week back please can I ask that you remind your sons and daughters of the importance of maintaining social distance whilst travelling to school.

We are doing our utmost within school including measures such as year-group bubbles, staggered lunch times and staggered release times at the end of the day. However, it is important that students understand why it is necessary to maintain this distance whilst out of school to avoid our hard work being undermined.

It is only natural that young people want to see their friends, socialise and have fun. Indeed, it is important for both their personal development and their mental health. Yet we have to balance this need against our collective desire to keep our school open and avoid further Covid-19 cases. I would therefore ask that students restrict their social circle, whilst travelling to school, to a small number of friends in their year group.

Testing

The testing of staff and students has progressed extremely well. The planning around staffing the test centre whilst ensuring that students' lessons are delivered online and within school has been complex. Therefore, I wish to pass on my thanks to all staff colleagues and members of the wider community that have been involved in supporting this process. Almost 3,000 tests have been conducted on site thus far with home test kits ready to be distributed for next week.

Year 11 Bubble Closure

Many parents will be aware that we were forced to close our Year 11 bubble earlier this week. Unfortunately, a student tested positive several days after his return to school and it subsequently emerged that they had been symptomatic for several days without staff in school being informed. This is bitterly disappointing for us all, not least those students that are already anxious about their GCSE outcomes. I would therefore like to reiterate the importance of not sending children to school if they are symptomatic and using the testing process to ensure that children do not have the virus.

Wider School Life

A number of you have written to me asking about when the normal range of after school activities and provision will re-commence. Please accept my assurance that we are very keen to resume the wide range of clubs, classes and team activities that usually take place beyond the end of the timetabled day. Our challenge will be gradually resuming this in line with emerging Government guidance for schools on when it is safe to do so.

When permitted, the first communal activities likely to resume will be assemblies and other groups that come together within year group bubbles. We hope that that by the end of the academic year we will be close to normal. Much remains dependent on the situation locally and nationally.

Food Donations

Our thanks go to GIST for continuing to donate food to those in our school community in need. We have received several large deliveries of food that have been distributed. In each case the recipient

families have been extremely grateful for the support that has been given during this challenging national period.

The Future

Our new technology building is progressing well in its construction. Over the next couple of weeks, the purple frame (that many of you will have observed from London Road) will become covered as bricklayers complete the outer-skin of the new block. Our school governors have recently met to approve the purchase of new classroom equipment for the building which will include a number of specialist art and technology items.

Uniform

From September our new Year 7 students will be wearing a new school uniform, different to that currently worn by the rest of the school. This will include a dark blue blazer, with light blue trim, and a new school tie with colours to match the different school houses.



A patterned skirt will replace the current black skirt, although Year 7 boys and girls will still be able to wear black trousers.

As mentioned previously, this change in uniform will initially be rolled-out through the year groups annually so **all students already in The Abbey School will continue to wear their existing uniform** for the foreseeable future and families will be able to acquire replacement items from suppliers.

Finally, we intend on purchasing Abbey School bags for those students in Key Stage 4 that currently do not have them ready for the next school year since these will become part of their uniform from Sept 2021.

Parents' Forum

Last term we held our inaugural Parents' Forum meeting with those parents that had asked to take part. In the coming days we plan to have our second event which will have a focus on the wellbeing and welfare of our students. Should you be interested in becoming part of this group, and feel able to commit to attend termly meetings with a small group of other parents, then we would be interested in hearing from you at info@abbeychoolfaversham.co.uk.

As always, our school staff will provide advice and guidance as students readjust to a more normal form of schooling. Should you have concerns or queries we will always endeavour to respond as quickly as reasonably possible. That said, I would kindly ask for your forbearance as we return to our normal schedules and routines. Our switchboard has been very busy during the first few days back so please be mindful that our staff, including teachers, pastoral leaders and senior staff, may take slightly longer than usual to fully address your enquiries during the initial period back.

Please stay safe and thank you for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr Rowland Speller".

Dr Rowland Speller
Headteacher