

13th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you as we approach the end of a most unusual school year.

As I reflect upon the challenges that we have all had to overcome individually and collectively due to the global pandemic, I am immensely proud of our school community. The resilience and fortitude that has been displayed by everyone is nothing short of awe-inspiring.

A number of moments crystallised the enduring spirit of our school community. For example, the work of school volunteers to support our pop-up food bank or the extraordinary efforts made by teaching staff to distribute computer equipment to those families that needed it. The number of highly positive comments from the parent body about the quality of online learning during the period of school closures was also extremely heart-warming.

There have undoubtedly been some low-points. The impact on children's learning from being out of the normal classroom environment cannot be understated. The lack of normal social interaction with friends and family during lockdowns has affected many. Issues linked to anxiety and mental health have also been foremost in our minds as we have gradually returned to normality since the spring. Our pastoral team and teaching staff have been working tirelessly to support and guide those students that have been most affected by recent events.

Within our staffing structure we have a team of in-house Academic Mentors that have been working with individual students from each year group. In addition, we have been making use of the National Tutoring Programme in some specific cases. At the end of July we also have a 'Summer School' for students that have been identified as benefiting most from this support. This is now fully booked with almost 150 students due to attend!

When we return in September 2021 we expect this to be without bubbles, in line with recent Government announcements. Students will travel across the school site for their lessons although there will continue to be risk mitigation in place, in so far as is reasonable and proportionate. Much of what this exactly looks like will be determined by guidance issued to us by the Department for Education over the summer. However, it will likely continue to emphasise hand washing, good hygiene and avoiding unnecessary contact with others.

Some Key Points about the Return in September

We will be offering all of our children a lateral flow test kit to take home prior to the end of the academic year. This test kit is to be used in the days preceding return in September. We will be asking students to make a declaration whether they have completed a lateral flow test so that we have a full record of testing. Whilst we cannot compel any child to take a test as part of their condition for return to school, we would strongly urge parents and carers to promote this as part of supporting the health of the whole school community.

We will be phasing the return of students over several days in the new academic year. This will enable us to properly induct students back into the school and fully brief them on what to expect.

Students' Return in September

The first three days of term, which in a normal year would be staff INSET days, will be for Year 7 and Year 12 induction only, with the rest of the year groups in a phased return. All students are expected to attend at the usual start time of **8.45am**.

- 1st September – Year 7 Transition & Induction Day #1
- 2nd September – Year 7 Transition & Induction Day #2 plus Year 12 for course registration only
- 3rd September – Year 7 Transition & Induction Day #3 plus Year 12 first full day
- 6th September – Year 10, Year 11 and Year 13 return
- 7th September – Years 8 & 9 return

The removal of bubbles will create a new pattern of working for staff and students, as will the introduction of a split-lunchtime arrangement and the ten-minute extension to the school day.

Lesson Timings for 2021-2022

Period	Start Time	End Time
Line-up	8:45	8:50
Tutor Time/PSHE	8:50	9:20
DEAR	9:20	9:30
Lesson 1	9:30	10:30
Lesson 2	10:30	11:30
Lesson 3a (inc. 8/9/10 lunch)	11:30	12:30
Lesson 3b (inc. 7/11 lunch)	12:30	13:30
Lesson 4	13:30	14:30
Lesson 5	14:30	15:30

School Uniform

At this point in the school year, we always take the opportunity to remind parents of school uniform expectations which are published on our school website.

<http://www.abbeychoolfaversham.co.uk/416/school-uniform>

The key changes for September 2021 should not affect any students already at our school but include:

- An entirely new designed uniform for the incoming Year 7 cohort, which includes a dark blue blazer with light blue piping. Girls in Year 7 will have a tartan patterned skirt. Those in other school year groups will continue to wear our current black uniform that will continue to be available from local stores, Rival and Forsters.
- The expectation is that students in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 will all be using The Abbey School bag which is the rucksack available from our school suppliers. This means that those students currently in Year 8 who already use the bag will continue to do so as part of the uniform next year (and for the rest of their school career until all year groups use this).

Teacher Assessed Grades

Senior staff have separately sent correspondence to all those with children in key exam groups with details about the process supporting the awarding of Teacher Assessed Grades this summer. Parents and carers should be aware that there has been huge emphasis at a national level in ensuring that schools can fully evidence any grades using a range of sources including assessments that took place in Spring 2021. Grades will be shared on the designated exam results day which this year is Thursday 12th August.

Last day of term

On Friday 16th July, we will break up as usual at 12.30pm and buses and taxis have been notified. Students will be dismissed from their form groups from 12.30pm in 5-minute intervals. Students eligible for free school meals will be permitted to collect their lunch from the dining hall throughout the morning.

Official opening of the new 'C' block

On Friday 2nd July we welcomed Faversham and Mid Kent MP, Helen Whately, and the Mayor of Faversham to the official opening of our new Art and Technology Block. The new building, comprising thirteen specialist classrooms, replaces the older 'C' block that is scheduled for demolition this summer. The new facility will greatly enhance the breadth and depth of curriculum opportunities in the creative subjects in our school. It means that the next generation of Faversham students can be assured that they have access to learning opportunities that spread far beyond the traditional academic subjects.

Helen Whately commented that it was a huge privilege to open the new Art and Technology Block, adding that this fantastic new facility will help give pupils at the school the best possible place to learn and put the school on a strong footing for the future. She agreed that it has been a tough year for teachers, pupils, and parents and helping young people catch up on time away from the classroom is a top priority. This new building will help give the school and wider community a strong foundation for recovery from the pandemic.

Construction firm, T&B Contractors, have completed the £6.8m building project as part of the Government's Priority Schools Building Project 2 with the design of the build completed by Clague Architects from Canterbury.

The Abbey School continues to grow to support the ongoing development of the town. This September, it is expanding by one form of entry to a capacity of 240 students in Year 7. We have been in consultation with Kent County Council and architects regarding how we can add further classroom spaces on the site of the old C block, once it is pulled down. We envisage an additional state of the art building is built over the next 36 months, in which we intend to house our performing arts department and are seeking a new theatre space and expansion to the dining hall to further support this change



Helen Whately MP cuts the ribbon for the opening of the new building supported by Mayor, Alison Reynolds and Chair of Governors and Deputy Mayor, Trevor Martin.

External view of our new 'C' block:



Examples of some of our bright and spacious new classrooms and corridors



I hope that all members of the school community have a restful summer break following what has been an eventful year. Please do not hesitate to contact the school prior to Thursday 15th July should you have any queries, after which time the school office will be closed to enquiries until 1st September 2021.

Kind regards

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

Dr R Speller
Headteacher