



Midhurst Rother College

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Part of United Learning

26 June 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Midhurst Rother College Covid-19 update

As always, I hope you, your family and friends are well. The impact of the pandemic is affecting all areas of our lives. Many families in our locality have suffered either through illness, loss of employment and associated financial pressures, or are caring for others. It is positive that we are beginning to move cautiously out of lockdown and the infection rate is receding. For all those families who have been directly affected, you are very much in our thoughts. Please contact us if we can provide any help or support.

This letter provides an update on Covid-19 and our plans for September. As per my previous communication, I include sub-headings for ease of reading.

College priorities regarding lockdown

Parents / carers will be aware that our response to the pandemic has been guided by the following principles. These remain unchanged and guide our decision making. I reiterate them here, for your reference. We give priority to:

1. the health and safety of all students and staff, planning for and mitigating risk;
2. provide high quality continuity of education for all students, whether they are working in College or remotely;
3. liaise with Local Authority transport to maintain high levels of hygiene, social distancing and cleanliness on buses;
4. care for our students' and staff wellbeing, and;
5. adhere to the guidance from the government and Public Health England.

Planning for the rest of this term

We currently have a quarter of Year 10 and a quarter of Year 12 students in College, alongside our group of vulnerable and keyworker children; this is around 85 children in College each day. The students are kept in protective 'bubbles' and we minimise mixing student groups as far as possible to reduce the possible risk of virus transmission. There is a range of health and safety measures we have in place that parents / carers of those children are aware of. This partial reopening has been organised in a safe, measured and gradual way and feedback from both staff and students has been very positive. I am grateful to the teaching and support staff for making this such a success.

Whilst some students are receiving lessons in College for some of the time, the vast majority of students will continue to learn from home for the rest of this academic year. Following parental and student feedback, we are now running more live lessons and it is essential that your son / daughter checks their connect messages and emails to make sure they do not miss a lesson. We have also started to run live stream assemblies for students, too, and it is good to see the numbers attending rising. I must thank all parents and carers for the enormous amount of support you are giving at home; it is making a real difference.

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I confirm that activities week and work experience will not take place this year, even virtually. We will continue to set work for students during this time. Parents / carers have been notified about all residential trips and visits that the College has organised and the status of those trips with regard to refunds or postponements. The College has a planned INSET day on July 2, which will be used to plan our 'recovery curriculum' for teaching all students in September. We will be open for vulnerable and keyworker children only on that day and staff will not set work for children.

Reopening the College

I am keen that the College reopens to all students. We are here to educate young people and for our building to echo with the hustle and bustle of their movement, conversation and laughter. At present, there is a gaping chasm where they should be and I look forward to them returning soon. This will depend upon government guidance, social distancing measures and the infection rate. Transport to and from the College is also an important consideration, as most students travel to College on buses; capacity may be impacted by updated social distancing requirements. I look forward to receiving updated guidance from the Department for Education to inform our planning for the new academic year. It has been reported in the national media that the Secretary of State for Education is considering pushing exams back to July next year to allow for increased teaching time for GCSE and A-Level. I will email parents and provide an update as soon as I am able to.

2020/2021: a recovery year

I am incredibly impressed with the way in which most of our students have adapted to online learning. We track students' work every week and it is clear that they are working hard and doing well. They deserve huge credit for this – they are clearly doing all they can to **keep up, not catch up**. Whilst I recognise that they are working well from home, it is not the same as being taught in College. The next academic year will be a 'recovery year' for us at Midhurst Rother College. Our energies will be focussed on making sure that students are able to fulfil their potential through closing any gaps in their learning and rebuilding confidence where needed. Our strategic priorities for the new academic year are as follows:

1. Increase leadership capacity in order that strategic direction is provided in areas where this is most needed
2. Pastoral care, guidance and support to rebuild students' confidence, where necessary
3. Recovery curriculum to make sure students close gaps in their learning
4. Strategic catch-up / intervention programme in place
5. Independent learning to make sure students are better equipped to learn from home in case of localised lockdowns and to revisit content pre-covid

We have appointed Mr Lloyd as Associate Vice Principal from September. He will lead on pastoral care, guidance and support and will add capacity to this team. Our aim here is to build students' confidence and increase self-esteem where we need to through strong pastoral provision.

We will shortly appoint a new senior leader to lead on our recovery curriculum strategy. This is a new post, which I feel is needed in response to Covid-19. Staff are working to create plans that will enable students to catch up on any missed learning, alongside high-quality classroom teaching. We will also focus on improving independent learning and will teach this through our tutor and PSCE programmes.

Some of our enrichment time will be used for catch-up next year, which will mean that our offer will be temporarily reduced. This is a necessary short-term measure to place greater emphasis on learning, progress and outcomes. In addition, we have already appointed 1:1 and small group tutors to provide intervention sessions, as appropriate.

Parents / carers will be aware that high expectations and high standards are crucial to continued success. It is important that all students are in the correct College uniform and adhere to jewellery, make-up and hairstyle rules (when hairdressers are able to reopen!) for the new term. I want to make sure that we start the new year, hopefully with everyone back, in our uniform and ready to learn.

I would like to thank all parents / carers for your support throughout this challenging time. If there is anything we can do to support, please let us know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Edwards', with a small flourish at the end.

Stuart Edwards
Principal