



# Midhurst Rother College

The best in everyone™

Part of United Learning

30 April 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

## **Covid-19 update on College closure and planning for reopening**

I hope that you, your families and loved ones are all well and staying safe. I know that many families have been affected by coronavirus. You are very much in our thoughts – please do stay in touch with us and if we are able to support you in any way, we will do our best to do so.

We are approaching the end of the sixth week since the government announced that schools across the country were closed to all students except those classified as vulnerable or whose parents are keyworkers. This is still the case and this situation is likely to remain in place for this half-term at least. The Secretary of State announced on Wednesday afternoon that he would give schools and headteachers significant advance notice of when students will return. He also indicated, as widely reported in the national media, that any return to school would be phased and that we would not return to all students attending at the same time.

We had been anticipating this announcement and had already started our strategic planning for the eventuality that schools would open for a smaller number of students in the first instance. This must be managed in a way that places health and safety as our number one priority. It is essential that we take all measures possible to protect our students and staff and by extension, their families. Our approach to reopening the College is guided by the following principles. We must give priority to:

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

I will inform you as soon as I am able with regard to which students or year group(s) will return to the College first. This will include social distancing, reduced numbers in classes, increased hygiene and more frequent school cleaning, amongst many other areas. Whilst we will take all measures possible to protect children and staff through social distancing, I must also acknowledge that this will be very difficult to maintain at all times. One of the great joys of working with children is their enthusiasm, spirit and sense of fun; keeping them apart from each other at all times will be very difficult to manage. I will provide more detailed information prior to the College reopening with regard to how we will manage this and also our expectations of students; meeting these expectations will be crucial to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

In the meantime, it is important that students continue to work on tasks they are being set. Teaching is based very much on relationships and we are looking at ways to introduce more 'live' teaching into

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every year group, as well as tutor time. It will not be possible to do this for every lesson, but we are training staff on how to do this. We will provide an update to parents on this in the coming days, which will include an updated 'IT Acceptable Use Policy', which will be opt out only. Thank you for the considerable work you are doing to support with home-schooling your children. I know this presents multiple challenges, in particular for families where parents are also working from home. I also hope that our 'remote mentoring' is helping to support you and your child.

Coronavirus is impacting on all areas of our society. As well as the health concerns, there is also the financial and economic impact. I am aware that the current situation has affected families with regard to jobs and reduced income. If you are currently experiencing hardship at home, please let our Business Manager know [Katherine.Chard@mrc-academy.org](mailto:Katherine.Chard@mrc-academy.org) It may be that we are able to offer support with free school meal vouchers as well as signposting parents / carers to other areas that may offer support.

Regrettably, it is now clear that Years 11 and 13 will not return to College this academic year. I look forward to seeing our current Year 11 when they are in Year 12 with us in September. We still hope to be able to run the Year 11 prom (date TBC) in the future when it is safe to do so. We are working on 'centre assessed grades' for those year groups at the moment, due to their exams being cancelled. As a reminder: A-Level results day is 13 August, GCSE 20 August. Students will be able to collect their results from 10am on those days.

I would like to provide an update in relation to upcoming trips and visits. We are working closely with tour operators and are in daily contact with them. At the present time, I can confirm that the Sicily and Foxlease trips are both cancelled. We are in discussion with tour operators about obtaining refunds for parents and will update parents as soon as we are able to. I understand the urgency of this: we will be in touch with those parents early next week in relation to how refunds will be managed. The Normandy trip is not due to leave until July and we are communication with the tour operator about the feasibility of this trip. I will update you when I have more information on this.

I look forward to reopening the College to all students and to having your child back with us again soon. Please do stay in touch. If we can help at all, please let us know.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Edwards  
Principal



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