

RIPLEY ST THOMAS

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY



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Dear Parents and Carers of Year 7

I hope you are well and that you have had a good summer. It has certainly been an eventful one in schools as I am sure you will be aware if you follow the news! Our attentions turn now to September and it seems that every letter we write at the moment starts with an apology for the length of it, but as you can imagine there is a lot to tell you ahead of our return next week. We are very much looking forward to welcoming the newest members of our Ripley family into Year 7 and returning to some sort of normal.

Risk Assessment Overview

As you will know from Mrs Nicholls' letter at the end of term, following the government's published guidance on how to bring all pupils back to school safely, we have carried out a Risk Assessment, which has been considered by the whole staff, by the Trade Unions, by the Governors of Ripley and the Trustees of The Bay Learning Trust and it has been checked by an external Health and Safety company. The Risk Assessment [Coronavirus (COVID-19): risk assessment for pupils at school] is available for you to read on the Policies page of our website.

There is significant detail in the risk assessment, the main aspects to highlight are:

- The "groups" will be year groups; each year group will be assigned to a particular area of school and a particular outside area at breaks and lunchtimes. The groups will not mix in school.
- Pupils will all be following their normal school timetables and will be taught by the teachers assigned on that timetable; there will be no narrowing of the curriculum.
- Groups will remain in their assigned rooms for the majority of their subjects and will move only where specialist rooms are needed.
- Enhanced cleaning routines are in place; the emphasis on handwashing and using sanitisers on entry and exit, alongside the "catch it, bin it, kill it" routine remains high profile.
- Entry and exit to the school will be supervised and managed to avoid mixing; lunch and break times will be staggered to avoid long queues.
- Separate risk assessments are in place for all specialist areas.

Face Coverings

As you will be aware, the Government changed its advice on face coverings last night. In line with the new guidance, pupils at Ripley will be allowed to wear a reusable plain blue or black face mask when in communal areas if they wish. This is currently optional, but we would like you to be prepared with a blue or black mask in the event of a local lockdown when this will become compulsory.

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Face coverings will not be worn in the classroom as this forms part of the year group bubble. If you are worried because your child has a particular medical condition or individual circumstances, please do get in contact with us.

Key Points to Note

- Corridor use will be restricted as much as possible; pupils will walk round the exterior of the buildings to access rooms. Please could you ensure that your child has a **waterproof coat with a hood**.
- The end of the day will be slightly staggered to avoid large groups of pupils mixing. Pupils who walk home, who get the train or a bus from town, or who are being collected, will be released at 3pm. Pupils catching the first wave buses will be released at 3.05pm and the remainder, catching second wave buses, will exit at 3.10pm.
- Where possible, young people are encouraged to avoid public transport and come to school on foot or by bicycle. Bike sheds are available for use on the back yard. Pupils coming on their bike are encouraged to wear a cycle helmet.
- Pupils travelling on buses – both school buses and service buses – will be required to wear their blue or black face coverings, as mentioned above. **Pupils who do not have face coverings will not be permitted to travel on the bus, so it is critical they bring one to school.** If a pupil is not allowed on the bus, we will contact parents and arrangements must then be made to collect your child from school.
- We have been informed that bus companies will not be providing hand sanitiser on the buses, so we recommend that **pupils bring their own bottles of hand gel** with them each day for use on the bus.
- **Full school uniform will be required in September.** The Uniform and Appearance policy is on the Policies page of our website. Normal school rules will apply. The government guidance states that uniform does not need to be cleaned more often than usual, nor does it need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.
- **Please ensure pupils have their own basic equipment.** The essential equipment is: blue or black pen, pencil, green pen, ruler, rubber, whiteboard pen, calculator (CASIO fx-85GT PLUS), a pair of compasses and a protractor. Please note, **a reading book** will be part of the essential equipment in the new academic year. Pupils must bring something to read with them every day.
- **Parents should only come to school by appointment.** We will not be able to accept forgotten kit/lunches/equipment etc. As has been the case over the last year, parents will not be able to drive onto the premises either to drop children off between 8.45 and 9.15am or to pick up children at the end of school.
- During the first weeks, pupils will be regularly reminded of our routines and expectations so that teaching and learning can resume as normal. The behaviour policy has been amended to take into account year group bubbles as well as social distancing measures where bubbles cannot be preserved.
- There will be no canteen service either before school or at break time – **please do ensure your child has a snack for break if they need one and that he/she has water to drink.** Pupils will be able to fill water bottles at school.
- Food will be available to buy in the canteen at lunchtime. Different sides of the dining room will be used for different bubbles purchasing hot food during our staggered lunch break. There will be space in the dining room and outside for pupils who have brought a packed lunch.

- **School attendance will be mandatory again from next week.** The only exceptions will be where a pupil is unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating due to having symptoms or a positive test result, because they have returned from holidaying in a country not on the exemptions list, or because they are a close contact of someone who has the virus.
- If you have **recently returned from a holiday abroad**, please check the most up-to-date guidance on quarantine measures. If you have returned from a country which is not listed on the government's 'travel corridor' list, you must self-isolate for 14 days. Please ensure you inform school if this is the case.
- **Please do not send your child into school if he/she is unwell.** If your child has symptoms of Covid-19 (a new, continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) you should order a test immediately at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access.
- Throughout the autumn term, we normally have a number of pupils and teachers who have coughs, colds and high temperatures. Whilst we will be vigilant and will send home children who present with symptoms, all parents will not be informed each time a child is sent home with a cough. Please be assured that you will be informed in the event that a pupil at Ripley tests positive, so that the necessary steps can be taken as regards to self-isolation and testing for those who have been in close contact, in line with guidance from Public Health England.

Work for pupils who are self-isolating

Over the course of the next academic year, it is possible that there will be instances when pupils are unable to attend school if they are required to self-isolate as outlined above. Whilst we hope that such instances are low, we need to be prepared so that pupils do not fall behind in their education.

At Ripley, we use an online learning platform called Firefly. During September, pupils in Year 7 will learn how to use this platform during their computing lessons. From October, all homework will be set via Firefly and parents will be given information about how to access this via the Parentapp, nearer the time.

From September, teachers will be uploading lesson resources such as PowerPoints, and associated tasks onto Firefly for each lesson. This will allow pupils who are not able to attend school to keep engaged with their learning and prevent them from falling behind.

It will be the responsibility of the pupil to check Firefly and catch up the work missed. Pupils will be able to contact teachers to ask questions or submit work using their school email. It is an expectation that pupils complete the work missed whilst they are self-isolating. Exceptions will obviously be made when pupils are unwell themselves.

If your child is unable to attend school before they have received their Firefly and email login details, we will provide support to ensure they are able to log on remotely.

Please note, this online work will not be a replacement home education alternative. As stated above, all pupils are expected to return to school in September.

First Day Back

The first day in school for pupils in Years 7 is **Wednesday 2 September**. They will be greeted by staff on arrival and directed to the back yard where they will meet their new form

tutors. As stated above, please ensure they bring a coat in case it is raining. We have a film company who will be making a DVD recording of their first day in school, which you will be able to purchase at a later date as a keepsake and so you can see what they got up to!

I will make sure I keep in regular contact with you over the coming weeks and will certainly update you if there are any changes in the government guidance. Let's hope there are no last minute U-turns this week!

There will undoubtedly be anxieties for some about starting school. Whilst no one is able to provide a totally risk-free environment, the measures we have taken will ensure that our school is as safe as possible for our return next week. I am confident that our young people will also feel reassured once they are back in their new routines.

These words from Philippians 4:6-7 remind us that we can put our trust in God, particularly in times of uncertainty: "Do not be afraid about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I pray for this peace for all who are anxious as we move into our new normal and that our young people will be filled with hope and with optimism as they begin their education with us. We can't wait to welcome them to our Ripley family!

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Walmsley', written in a cursive style.

Mrs Catherine Walmsley
Acting Principal