

19th August 2020

Dear Families

On behalf of the Governors I would like to take this opportunity to extend an early welcome to you as you start to prepare your children to return to school. It is hard to believe that by the time term starts in September it will be almost 6 months since the schools were fully open to all students. Over this time, we know that our families will have had many different experiences, some very sad, some worrying and some really enjoying being able to spend extended time together.

Some of our students will have progressed well learning remotely, some have been in school throughout, but not in normal classes and some will sadly have not been able to do much learning. It doesn't matter how much learning and work has been achieved over the last few months, it is now time for all our students to return to the classroom. To learn from teachers and other students, to develop their social skills and enjoy life outside of the home again.

We know that returning to school may be something that is causing either yourself or your child anxiety and the uncertainty of the Covid 19 virus level in our community doesn't help. Nobody can completely guarantee that there will be no Covid infection in our schools, but we do know that we are making many changes to how schools work, to reduce the risk of passing on any infection. For months now we have all been practising "washing our hands" or using sanitisers. We have learnt how to stand away from others, how not to hug each other, no matter how nice that would be.

In our schools depending on the classrooms and numbers of students we are changing how desks are arranged, start times, entry points, lunch arrangements, all with a view to making sure the schools are as safe as possible for both our staff and our students. We need you to help ensure that your children understand why this is important but also for you to consider your own home situation and consider what you need to do to minimise risk. With elderly or vulnerable relatives at home this may for example include changing out of school uniform as soon as children arrive home, washing hands and faces and of course limiting those all-important hugs.

Whilst children may get Covid 19, the vast majority are not badly or dangerously ill as a result. The key challenge is to ensure that we minimise the chances of anyone passing on the virus. To do that we need to quickly identify if someone has the virus, to take swift action to isolate groups where this is the case, and to remember to keep our distance from each other and to wash hands. We are now wearing face covering on public transport and in shops and other closed in places. Whilst it is not compulsory to wear face coverings in

schools and it is not encouraged, if this will help your child return to school, it will of course be ok to do so, whilst they build up their confidence.

You will have seen in some parts of the country that there have been local lock downs as there are spikes of infection, we are preparing for this with packs for home schooling ready and waiting should that happen in Islington. We are also in our secondary schools ensuring that each student has their own Chromebook that will be their daily “textbook” and will enable them to work from home should that be necessary. However, learning from home needs to be the exception rather than the rule. We need every student back in school, so that we can help them build on the learning of the last 6 months, and get back on track for the high levels of success that we know each one of them is capable of.

Inevitably it will be strange, for all of us. Some students will be going to a new venue, a new building with different people around, all will be in a new year group. After months of not having to get up to go to school on time, it will be hard to get back into that routine for both the students and you, their families. It is really worth having a few practise runs, trying an earlier “bedtime”, re-establishing breakfast, and certainly trying on the school uniform to see if it still fits!

We recognise that you may have questions, concerns and difficulties that you need help with, please do get in touch with your school. Each one of our schools will do all they can to help your children return to school in September. We know it will be lovely for some and hard for some others, but we also know it is essential for all. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

I look forward to hearing of the 100% attendance at each of our schools, I know our teachers are excited about hearing the chatter and noise of a full classroom, please do all you can to help us make this happen.

Yours faithfully

Jill McLaughlin
Chair of Governors