



Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

Headteacher: Sunil Chotai, BSc

17th July 2021

Dear Parents /Carers,

I hope that this last newsletter of this academic year finds you all in good health and in an optimistic mood for the future. The last year and a half has been very testing to say the least for so many in our school community; parents, students and members of staff have had to rise to so many unfamiliar challenges. Thankfully, the vast majority have coped very well.

Following the Prime Minister's recent announcements, we can now hopefully look forward to the resumption of nearer normal schooling in September. I am not sure how this announcement has been received by members of the school community, but moving onto a situation from September where we are working in a more normal way – not in zones, without the requirement to use PPE, will be much welcomed by the vast majority of us, I believe. I personally can't wait to get the school back to some sense of normality - the present arrangements, although really well managed by staff, students and families, are obviously a severe hindrance to the proper and full education of our students.

Over the last few days, following the receipt of the latest government guidance on the opening of schools from September, members of senior staff have been considering our plans; plans that will enable us to get students' education back on track after such a lengthy and deep disruption.

From September, according to the guidance issued this week, there are still a number of control measures that we will need to keep. What has been removed, (thankfully), is the need for bubbles, zones, the need to track and trace close contacts and the obligatory wearing of masks. What still remains is in terms of restrictions:

Good hygiene for everyone

- Frequent and thorough hand cleaning will need to be continued – in our case we will need to continue to make sure that pupils clean hands using a hand sanitizer regularly- several times a day.
- Catch it, bin it, kill it approach will need to be followed for the foreseeable future

School cleaning regimes will need to be maintained

- We will need to continue to make sure that frequently touched surfaces are cleaned regularly during the school day and the fogging of some rooms between lessons whilst reduced in frequency will be need to be maintained in some cases.

Keeping rooms well ventilated

- We will still need to keep windows and doors open to ensure good ventilation.

Following public health advice on self –isolation

Anyone displaying symptoms will of course need to self-isolate and make sure that their contact with others is minimised. There is no requirement for schools to trace close contacts, this will be undertaken by the NHS Test and Trace service.

Testing

As parents will be aware, all students will be offered two lateral flow device Covid-19 tests in the first few days of next term. Our arrangements for this are similar to the one we implemented in March on return from lockdown. The first of these tests will need to be completed successfully before students can fully return, the second will be undertaken 3-5 days after the first; students will undertake this second test once they have commenced attending school normally – they will leave classes to complete this.

In terms of parental consent for these mass LFD tests we would like to use the consent already granted by parents/carers in March, we will only be seeking consent for our new Year 7 students this time around.

If you have not filled in your LFD test consent form and would like your son or daughter to undertake the test then you will find the consent form on our website with details of how it should be returned to us in good time. If you wish to withdraw the consent that you granted in March then you will have to contact us.

The table below summarises the staggered arrangements for the testing – please do read this carefully and note when your children are required to come into school to undertake their first tests and then return home immediately. Please note that each year group returns to full education the day after the first LFD test has been completed.

The full schedule for the two LFD tests is included for your reference as a separate attachment.

First day in school	Year groups in school all day & arrival time	Year groups testing and then returning home	Additional information
Wednesday 1 September	Year 7 08.45	Year 10, 11 and 12 LFD test 1 only and then return to home Reporting times for tests Year 10 08.50 Year 11 10.15 Year 12 11.40	Year 7 will be undertaking their induction with tutors
Thursday 2 September	Year 7 08.30 Year 10 08.30 Year 11 08.30 Year 12 08.30	Year 8, 9 and 13 LFD test 1 only and then return to home Reporting times for tests Year 8 08.50 Year 9 10.15	Year 8, 9, and 13 should report to school at the times indicated and not before Once LFD tests have been completed for

		Year 13 11.40	Year 8, 9 and 13 they will need to return home
Friday 3 September	Year 7 08.30 Year 8 08.30 Year 9 08.30 Year 10 10.30 Year 11 10.30 Year 12 10.30 Year 13 08.30	None	Year 7 to take LFD test 2 on this day
Monday 6 September	All students to be in school. Normal timetable with withdrawal to complete LFD 2 test during this week.		
Tuesday 8 September	All year groups in school		8.30am Lessons all day

Recently we received clarification from the Department of Education regarding the school's future role in relation to the management of tracing close contacts and I wrote to all parents about this on 16th July. To clarify, from 19th July the arrangements are very different and I have included below an extract from the DfE guidance for your information:

One of the key changes that will take place from 19 July is that education and childcare settings will no longer be asked to conduct routine contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case – or in the case of children – the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts. NHS Test and Trace already manages the contact tracing process for the rest of society – including children who have recorded a positive PCR test – and has expertise in supporting people to identify close contacts.

In line with this clarification, we will not be undertaking close contact tracing from the 19th July 2021.

The School Day

This will return to the pre-pandemic structure, there will be no staggered entry or exit from school. Some parents had reported that some of the staggered entry and exit from school was helpful, however because the local bus services that facilitate exit and arrival to school cannot accommodate staggered arrival from September, we have no option to consider changes to our normal day at this stage.

A reminder that the structure of the school day is:

8:30am	Registration
8:50am	Period 1
9:50am	Period 2
10:50am	Break
11:10am	Period 3
12:10pm	Period 4
1:10pm	Lunch
1:50pm	Registration
2:00pm	Period 5
3:00pm	End of day

Start of term arrangements September 2021

Tuesday 31st August Staff Inset day / Year 7 mass LFD testing in the afternoon

The return to school, as is the norm at the start of the academic year, is staged by year group. The details below set out when each year should attend:

Wednesday 1st September Year 7 only - normal schooling begins

Years 10, 11 and 12 to attend only for their first LFD test according to the timings above and then return home

Thursday 2nd September Years 7, 10, 11 and 12 - normal schooling begins

Years 8, 9 and 13 to attend for their first LFD test according to the timings in the grid above and then return home

Friday 3rd September All students in school – please note the staggered arrangements for Year 10,11 and 12 who arrive to school at 10.30

Front of School

The front of school will of course be particularly busy as children arrive in the morning and as they leave at the end of the day without the staggers that we have been using. Our plans are to continue with the current arrangements in terms of parental access to the front of school. You will recall that because of health and safety concerns access to cars to the front of school is limited, this will continue. In order to reduce congestion can I remind parents to:

1. Please drop off your children well away from the school gates, at the top of Jail Lane is best so that congestion on Jail Lane can be avoided and our local residents not inconvenienced.

2. Please be considerate when you are deciding on alternatives to picking up children after school. I regularly get complaints from local residents about parents parking in front of their drives.

I look forward to your support in this matter.

School Canteen Service

Over the last few weeks, following receipt of the canteen service survey results, we have had meetings with Independent Catering, who operate the service, to discuss improvements. We have discussed issues relating to:

1. Quality - improving the taste and general appealing nature of the food on offer.
2. Choice – how improvements in the menu can be made, including how more healthier choices can be made more appealing.
3. How hygiene and H&S practices are at the moment and the need to explain to parents the rationale behind these.
4. Speed of service – how a speedier service can be facilitated.

We have identified ways forward in each of these areas for September and we are confident that working together with the caterers we can engender a significantly improved offer for students and staff.

One of the issues that will immediately impact on the speed of service is the requirement for all students and staff to have their fob available when purchasing items; it has been reported that students who present without fobs are often slowing down the service considerably. I would like all parents to please check that their children have the canteen payment fob ready for September - students will not be served as normally without these and may have to wait separately if they are deemed to be slowing others down. If the fob has been lost then you will be able to obtain one in the first week in September.

Summer School

Most parents will be aware that we are offering a week long summer school for our new Year 7 students who are due to join us in September. This summer school, funded by the government's scheme, will be provisioned with a focus on supporting attending pupils to make up for some of their missed education. Our aim is to deliver a short summer school with a blend of academic education and enrichment activities to ensure that students make-up some lost time and also remain connected with their education.

Exam Results Days

This year the examination results days are Tuesday 10th August for KS5 examinations and Thursday 12th August for KS4 and GCSE.

Sixth form results will be available on Tuesday 10th August via timed appointments, a separate letter has been sent to Sixth Formers indicating their timeslot.

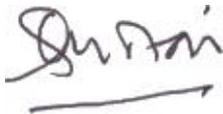
GCSE results will be available for collection from the Sixth Form Hub on Thursday 12th August from 9.00am until 12 noon via timed appointments; a separate letter has again been sent to all Year 11 indicating their time slot.

Sixth Form Enrolment

Sixth Form admission interviews will take place in the Sixth Form Hub over 2 days - Thursday 12th August and Friday 13th August. Student appointments could be on either of these days so please do be aware of this in your planning.

I do hope that you all get an opportunity to relax and unwind after what must be regarded as the most difficult two years that many of have ever encountered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunil Chotai', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Sunil Chotai
Headteacher