

Dear Varndean families

**Coronavirus update 28th May**

Further to my letter on the 14th I am writing to update you about our plans to further ease a few COVID restrictions after the half term break following a review of our risk assessment. We approach these with some caution, will monitor local cases closely and will act to reintroduce measures within school if we need to.

As of Monday the 7th June the following changes will apply:

- School will start at 8.45 for all year groups with tutor time moving back to the start of the day for all students.
- Please note the staggered timetable will remain so that breaks and lunchtimes are separated and the end of the day will be 2.55 for year 7 and 8 and 3pm for year 9 and 10. Students will continue to go to separate year group areas at break and lunchtime to reduce mixing.
- The changing rooms will open for PE lessons so all students will be required to wear full school uniform each day and bring their PE kit if they have PE (or dance) on that day or are planning to do an after school activity. Mr. Thomas has shared information with tutors about the changing room systems, particularly for our Year 7 students who haven't used them before. Several changes will take place in how we use our changing rooms such as using a one-way system, staggering numbers of students, sanitising the rooms between classes and ventilating the rooms.
- We will continue to increase the range of after school clubs and activities.
- We will introduce school base assemblies for two year groups at a time (7 / 9 and 8 / 10). These will take place in the morning on the normal day of the week.

Whilst we are looking forward to the time when we can remove masks fully, we have made the decision to keep face coverings in communal areas for a further two weeks until Friday 18th June. We are acting with caution over the slight increase of cases in the local area and the noticeable increase in some students currently self-isolating. During the first week back, we hope to hear about the further national restrictions being lifted and hope we are finally in a position to remove masks in communal areas. We thank you for your patience until we are able to do this and rest assured we are looking forward to this time.

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The virus is still present and as we have seen elsewhere in the country things can quickly change. It is critical that students continue with the routine of lateral flow testing twice weekly, self isolate and remain away from school if they have been in contact with a positive case and remember to socially distance and reduce mixing when at school and out and about in the community.

Please email [covid@varndean.co.uk](mailto:covid@varndean.co.uk) if you need to report a positive case over the half-term break as we will continue with contact tracing. We hope for our whole community that you do not need to contact us and can enjoy the sunshine promised.

I have enclosed a letter from the local authority which reminds us all what is expected of us.  
[FINAL Letter to Parents and Carers 260521.pdf](#)

### **Keeping safe**

Yesterday, we welcomed Elena Gualtieri, a parent and member of the 'Preston Park and Fiveways Local Action Team' who met our newly appointed Angelou Senior Students. The meeting was arranged to discuss the rise in anti-social behaviour in Brighton and students offered some fantastic suggestions about how we can all improve the area we live in and how we can support young people to feel safe in local areas and parks. I am pleased to say that this will be an on-going relationship as we support our local community group and that the Senior Students will write about their ideas in our next newsletter.

The police have asked us to pass on their concerns, which we share, about anti-social behaviour in the community. We know, because we teach them every day, that our students are fantastic and conduct themselves brilliantly. However, they are not adults and so can find themselves in escalating situations outside school where they, or others around them don't know how best to respond. We want parents/carers to be as informed as possible so that they can best support and advise our young people.

The police information and our own intelligence indicates the following locations as being problematic

- Hove Lawns
- Hollingbury Golf Clubhouse
- Blakers Park
- Varndean fields
- Preston Park
- Bursted Close bus stop

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- The Level

Drinking, drug taking and assaults are also being reported in some of these areas.

With half term coming up and the possibility of warmer weather we wanted to make you aware of these issues so that you can monitor and safeguard your child. Some families have asked for advice on sensible steps to take when children are out socialising with friends;

- Discuss where they are going and with who. Make sure that they stick together, have other parents contact details and agree on a home time collectively if possible. This will help build consistency of message within the peer group.
- Talk through different scenarios and give them strategies. eg what would you do if an aggressive person approached your group? What would you say to someone who offers you drugs? What if another group near you starts getting rowdy? What do they do if someone becomes unwell or is unconscious.
- Drinking and drug taking puts people at risk and makes them vulnerable. Talk through what these risks are: risk to health, risk of physical harm, poor choices/decisions, potential to become aggressive, risk of sexual abuse or harmful sexual behaviours.
- Consider offering a safer space that you can monitor - your garden/garage etc
- Agree that they will have phones on and answer your calls/texts. Agree whether a tracking app like find my friends would help keep them safe. Make sure phones are charged and/or charging packs taken. Help them to understand that being contactable is a priority and they can contact you (even if things have gone wrong!)
- Remind them that groups of more than 30 can be fined £200 each still under covid rules.

We really want our young people to enjoy the freedoms that they have been missing so much. But, like you, we want them to do this safely.

Wishing you all a lovely half-term.

Kind regards

Shelley Baker  
Headteacher

