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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that all of our families are well and enjoying the final few days of the summer break and that all of our students are looking forward to returning to school next week. I will try to keep this letter as short as possible as I appreciate that you have already been provided with a considerable amount of information regarding our arrangements for the Autumn Term. The following links will take you to the main sources of that information:

An overview of how we will be initially operating as a school, as outlined in last week's letter to parents:

<https://www.helsbyhigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Letter-to-Parents-21.08.20.pdf>

A video presentation summarising the key 're-opening' points: <https://vimeo.com/449712033>

Our full 'Re-Opening' guidance pack:

<https://www.helsbyhigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Reopening-Guidance-Sept-2020.pdf>

In addition, I would like to just provide a reminder of the key information provided prior to the end of the Summer Term (please see <https://www.helsbyhigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Letter-to-Parents-10.07.20.pdf> for full details):

### **Term Dates**

For most students Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September is the first day of term. For Year 7 students it is Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, which is also our Year 12 Enrolment Day (details of which have been sent separately to Year 11 students).

### **School Day Timings**

School will start and end at the usual times (8.45am and 3.05pm) for all students. Unfortunately the methods of transport used by our students do not make staggered start/finish times (as is being used by some schools) a practicable option for ourselves.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

These will not begin straightaway at the start of term, but will be re-introduced as appropriate a few weeks into the Autumn Term.

### **Uniform**

A reminder that in light of the difficulties this year in ordering, collecting and potentially changing items of uniform, school uniform in the first instance in September will initially consist of shirt, trousers/skirt and shoes only for all students. This is because we do not want any of our students, particularly those joining us in Year 7, to feel awkward by not having full

uniform compared to their peers. Once we are sure that all families have had the chance to get fully sorted with uniform then we will move to the wearing of full uniform later in September. Students may wear a coat or jumper around school if they need to during the first couple of weeks of term prior to the re-introduction of full uniform, although not in classrooms.

The essential addition to the uniform for the start of term is an appropriate bag. There are several reasons for this: students will need to carry all of their exercise books with them as in the first instance we will not be collecting them in at the end of lessons; also, with a limited catering service at lunchtime only, students may want to bring more food into school than they usually would do (for example to eat at break-time). Given that large gatherings of students inside the building would be inappropriate, in September we will be asking students to spend as much of their break and lunchtimes outside as possible, although we do have contingency plans in place for inclement weather that do not involve bringing large numbers of students together in single places inside the building.

### Face Coverings

Throughout our planning for the re-opening of school it has been clear to us that the area where more clarity was required was the issue of face-coverings and hence it came as no surprise that the government issued further guidance for schools this week, which we have been studying and reflecting upon carefully. Please see the following to access the full document, which is relatively short in length:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>

**In Classrooms:** The guidance is clear that face-coverings should not be worn in classrooms, even in areas of the country subject to a 'local lockdown'. *"Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided."*

**Communal Areas (including Corridors):** In 'local lockdown' regions the wearing of face-coverings has been made mandatory in these areas of their schools. Schools in other regions have been given the option of recommending the wearing of face-coverings in communal areas if they think that either of the following apply:

- *"where the layout of the school or college estate makes it particularly difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises"*

Given the nature of our building, with wide corridors compared to most schools, the fact that we are limiting student movement around the building considerably in our initial set-up (and are able to implement a one-way system where there is any significant movement, ie with Year 10 and 11 students) and also the fact that we do not intend to use any large communal spaces (such as the Hall or Dining Hall), we do not feel that this applies to us at the present moment in time and hence we will not initially be making the wearing of face-coverings mandatory for all students and staff in these areas.

- *"where on top of hygiene measures and the system of controls recommended in the full [opening guidance to schools](#) permitting the use of face coverings for staff, pupils or other visitors would provide additional confidence to parents to support a full return of children to school or college"*

We fully understand that for some students and their families, and also members of staff, the re-opening of schools will inevitably be a moment of some anxiety and apprehension and hence understand that they might feel more comfortable if they were able to wear a face-covering in areas such as corridors. Hence although we are not making such wearing mandatory for all students and staff, we are happy for those who do wish to wear a face-covering in these areas to do so.

It is important to emphasise that the above is our current position ahead of the start of Autumn Term. As with all aspects of our ways of working, we will continually review and amend our practice if/when required. The government is clear that they will also do this with

respect to their national guidance for schools, not least I suspect with regard to the issue of the wearing of face-coverings.

## Contact

As a school we have worked very hard to implement plans which appropriately balance the minimisation of risk with the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, as described in last week's letter to parents. Despite our best efforts to cover every possible aspect of working of a large secondary school it is probably inevitable though that students and parents may have further questions ahead of September. Please use [admin@helsbyhigh.org.uk](mailto:admin@helsbyhigh.org.uk) to get in touch with us if we can provide any further clarification or assistance. Any query will be forwarded to the appropriate colleague and will be responded to as quickly as possible, although it is worth mentioning at this point that all staff will be spending a considerable amount of time on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September attending training events in preparation for the return of students and hence a reply or phone-call on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> is possibly more likely than on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Year 6

As we look forward to September, I know I speak on behalf of all of students, parents, staff and governors in welcoming our new Year 7 students and their families to Helsby High School. Everybody connected with the school is extremely aware of how difficult the transition process to High School has been for them this year due to circumstances beyond anybody's control and so are more determined than ever to do everything possible to provide any support necessary. I know from relatively recent personal experience how welcoming the school is and hence I am confident that they will make a success of their move to our school. I very much look forward to meeting our new students in person next Wednesday.

I hope that all of our students and families have a lovely Bank Holiday Weekend. Next week will be a mixture of hugely contrasting emotions for all concerned with the school - excitement about returning to learning with friends, apprehension about new arrangements, relief that learning will no longer just be 'remote' and uncertainty about how the learning process will pick up again after the last 6 months. I know I speak for all staff though when I say how much we are looking forward to seeing our students again and going back to doing what we want to do - teach and support children in the school building. I know staff have worked very hard to plan for students' return and have robust plans in place to address the impact of the last 6 months and restore the confidence, progress and prospects of success of our young people.

Nobody knows whether next week signals the beginning of the end of the crisis in terms of disruption to education, or whether things will get better or worse at different times over the next few months. None of our young people deserved to lose precious childhood months in the way that they have done - time with friends, trips and visits, chances to take examinations - but I know that as a home-school partnership we are doing our best to support them through a very challenging time for everybody. That partnership doesn't end with the return to school though - it will actually be needed more than ever as students return to schools after 6 months away. Hence a huge and heartfelt thank you for all the support you have provided to date and all the support that I know you will continue to give our students on their return. With such support from home and at school, and with the impressive calmness, maturity and resilience which they have consistently shown throughout the crisis, it is wonderful to know that our students' futures are no less bright now than they were back in March.

Very best wishes,

Martin Hill  
Headteacher