

Dear Parents and Carers,

We cannot wait to welcome your children to Holyrood in September! As most of you will be aware from the media, the Department for Education has now published its guidance to schools on its plans for students from September. The good news is that the plans now extend to all students and the intention is that every student, in every year group, should return to school after the summer break. We are keen to ensure that this happens as we know that whilst students (and their parents) have worked hard from home, it is no replacement for the face-to-face teaching we can offer in school. In addition to this we also recognise the immense wellbeing benefits students gain from being amongst their peers and part of a vibrant community again with all the opportunities that it offers.

The vast majority of our Year 10 and 12 students have already returned to school on a dedicated day each week to have time with their teachers. This has been invaluable in helping us to start to build a picture of where they are in their learning so we can prepare for next year, and all that needs to be done to get them ready for their GCSEs, A-Levels and other Level 3 assessments.

In September, to allow everyone to return safely, there will be lots of changes to our 'normal' way of operating. The coronavirus is still at large in the community and nowhere is immune to its effects, so as the school gets back into action there will have to be multiple layers of controls and measures in place to minimise the risks to students and staff as much as possible. Whilst we will never be able to guarantee a completely risk-free environment (indeed no school, work place or institution can ever do this), by the start of next term we will have all the appropriate systems in place so that you can send your children into school with a real sense of confidence.

The guidance that has been produced by the government is quite complex and wide-ranging and will take us some time to unpack and work out how we can best implement it in a rural setting, on a site which is not a modern build, but rather one that has grown and evolved throughout the history of the school. There are some real challenges, but they are not insurmountable and I hope that over the coming weeks we will be able to share our plans with you, so you get a sense of what we are doing in preparation for our existing and new students.

The reason for writing today therefore, is not to provide detail of the plans, but rather to confirm that the school will be open to all children and to highlight a few key issues in readiness for September. The first relates to attendance. Over the past few months, the government has rightly placed a lot of emphasis on parental choice – allowing parents to determine whether they wish their children to take up the opportunity of returning to school. From September it is clear that all students should be in school unless there are clear medical reasons relating to shielding.

We would very much like to start the year in a positive way with all students in the correct uniform and with hair, make-up and piercings all in line with school expectations. This will help to avoid unwanted confrontations on the first few days back and ensure that students can quickly settle back into their studies. You can find our uniform guidance here:

<https://www.holyroodacademy.com/academy/parentscarers/uniform/32/>

At the moment we have no news about how school transport will operate under the new guidance, but when we receive this information from the local authority over the coming days, we will share it with the parents of students who travel to school using school transport.

Finally, I know that some of you may be making plans for holidays abroad now some of the restrictions around foreign travel are easing. As you will be aware in some cases there are two-week quarantine periods for people returning back to the UK, and whilst I would hope that your plans won't prevent your child starting back at school with their peers, if you think there is a possibility of this occurring (as your return is within two weeks of the start of the term), please could I ask that you get in touch and discuss the matter with your child's new Year Leader, Mrs Carlile.

I know that many of you may have many questions to which you would like answers, however, I would ask for your patience whilst we work through all the required planning to ensure a safe return for all students. Once I am in a position to share more detail with you I will certainly get back in touch, and be assured that you will receive details of all of the arrangements for next term in plenty of time, but that this might not be before the end of this term given the short timeframe and changing nature of the situation we face.

I would like to thank all parents for their continued support of our school. We are very excited to welcome our new Year 7s and I hope your children are ready and as excited as we are! To get ready to welcome your children safely back to school, we are having an additional INSET day on Monday 7th September and therefore year 7's first day with us will be Tuesday 8th September.

Yours Faithfully,

David MacCormick  
Headteacher  
Holyrood Academy