

3 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

We hope that you have had a good summer and are looking forward to returning to the new academic year ahead. We are writing to remind you about the start of term arrangements and provide an update in relation to COVID-19 measures in schools.

Details about the phased return of students, testing process and uniform expectations are on the College website and remain the arrangements as already shared with you before the summer break.

We would also like to remind everyone to check the start of term arrangements and the staggered start dates for each Year Group to ensure all students arrive in full College uniform, or our expected Code of Dress in the Sixth Form for the start of the new academic term on the correct day. All students should report to the main College Track by 8.55am on their allocated return day where their Tutors will be there to meet them.

Thank you to those parents/carers who have completed a bus application and paid the deposit which has secured a place on the College specific transport. The deadline for College bus applications has passed with many of our buses now full. Therefore, we cannot guarantee places will be available for anyone who has not applied or paid a deposit for the start of term. Bus passes have now been allocated with the last few being sent by first-class post at the end of today. Please remind students to carry their passes for identification on the correct buses. **(This does not apply to users of Devon School Transport)**

COVID-19 measures update

As most legal restrictions have now been removed across England, our students will experience a greater degree of normality from September.

In line with Stage 4 of the government's roadmap, the key changes in schools across England are:

- The removal of Year Group 'bubbles'.
- Under 18s (including up to 4 months after a student turns 18), and individuals that are double vaccinated, who are close contacts of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case will no longer be required to self-isolate.
- The College will no longer be routinely involved in contact tracing. This will be managed entirely by NHS Test and Trace.
- The removal of the general recommendation for the use of face coverings in education settings (unless directed by Public Health England in response to local/regional infection levels – please see below).
- Activities such as trips, sports fixtures and assemblies will resume.
- Sixth Form study spaces are open.

You will be aware that on Friday, 27 August 2021, Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay were designated areas for enhanced measures due to the high COVID-19 infection rate. This will be in force across the region for five weeks in the first instance. The impact on schools is minor but **it is now recommended by Public Health England that all secondary pupils in our region wear face coverings in communal school areas during September.**

At Ivybridge Community College this will apply to:

- Corridors
- Assemblies
- The queue for the dining facilities

This recommendation does not currently apply to classrooms, during lessons, when eating or when outside.

It would be greatly appreciated if students bring their own face covering but we do have a small supply of disposable face coverings on-site should any student lose theirs.

Please note that this is a recommendation for face coverings – it is not compulsory. No student at Ivybridge Community College will be denied an education or put under pressure/coercion if they choose not to wear a face covering.

We fully appreciate and understand that there are contrasting, and sometimes emotive views around COVID-19 measures and restrictions. As a College we are required to adhere to the most up to date published guidance and recommendations for schools provided by Public Health England and the Department for Education. Our aim is simply to strike an appropriate balance between providing our students with a high-quality educational experience, along with lots of opportunities to personally develop, with maintaining appropriate health measures.

Finally, we know there has been much talk in the news about vaccinations for 12–15 year-olds. Again, we know this is an emotive subject for some people. I can tell you that so far there has been no communication with schools at all about this, including whether schools are expected to have any role in the process, such as hosting on-site.

For your information, our COVID-19 risk assessment, which reflects the national changes to all schools, can be found on our website via the following link:

<https://www.ivybridge.devon.sch.uk/page/?title=Letters&pid=154>

We very much look forward to welcoming all our students back for the autumn term and hope this school year can offer all our young people a much greater degree of normality.

Yours faithfully

Rachel Hutchinson
Principal