



Duncombe
School

An Independent Preparatory
School and Nursery

BACK TO SCHOOL

Our plans for the September return



MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



Duncombe
School

Dear Parents,

I'm delighted to be able to write to you today with Duncombe School having been up and running for several weeks now and nearly all of our pupils back in classes and learning with their peers.

This has been a significant undertaking and has only been made possible through the synergy of exceptional dedication, hard-work and innovative ideas of the staff team; the wonderful way pupils have returned and followed the new Golden Rules and your excellent support of the safety measures that are in place. This really has been Team Duncombe at its best!

You will no doubt be aware that the Government recently made the latest guidance for all schools available and I am very pleased with the balanced and thoughtful approach that this has taken. As you will understand, planning for the September opening continues to be with the '**be flexible**' mantra in place. We are getting closer to normal but there will still be a need for clear Covid-19 related practices to help the school to function and minimize the risk of the spread of infection.

The recent local lockdown in Leicester has shown the need for us all to keep alert to these risks and manage them in a sensible and collective way.

There are more details on our planning overleaf and where additional information or changes are needed I will ensure that you are all kept up to date during the holiday.

One overall reflection I have is that I want to preserve the best that has come from this period – how the staff adapted their educational methods, how we embraced a new way of doing things, how the pupils coped with uncertainty and change, and how we built on our relationship with you, our parent body.

With that context in mind I am excited to share with you some exciting new initiatives, as part of the Cognita family of schools, later on in this booklet. These initiatives will capitalise on what we have learned over the last few months, take our educational and wellbeing provision for your child forward, and prepare us should a second wave require a localised lockdown.

During the week beginning 17th August all pupils will receive a digital postcard from their Form Teachers, a short video of welcome and an updated copy of the Golden Rules. Please do make some time to look at these carefully before our return.

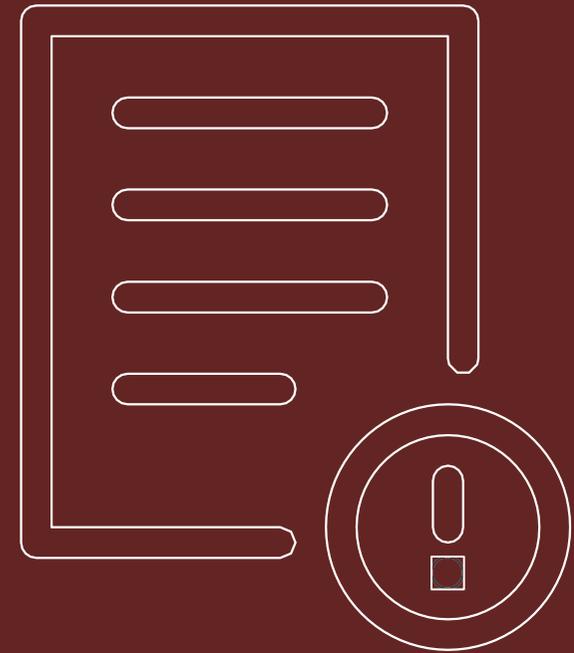
Thank you once again for your support of the school this Summer Term, and for your encouragement and feedback. I wish you all a happy and safe summer and look forward to an exciting new academic year.

Kind regards

Jeremy Phelan
Headmaster

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR

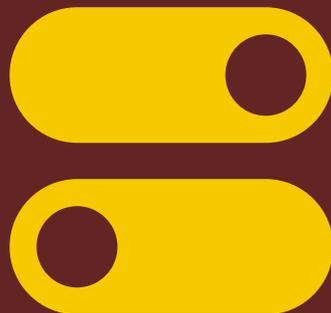
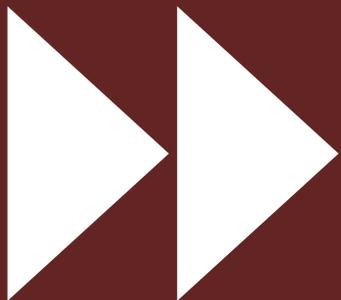
1. Working our way carefully to a new normal - this means **all pupils** and staff back with pod groups across Year groups.
2. Wellbeing - a focus on both students and staff to help them emotionally process the lockdown experience.
3. Safety – risk mitigation to maintain our enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures with updated procedures for confirmed cases and outbreaks
4. Growth mindset - taking the lockdown experience and continuing to innovate and grow from what we have learnt.



HOW WILL IT WORK?

The latest government guidelines have adapted the need for social distancing and as a result schools will be encouraged to return to a near full timetable for all year groups.

This is great news and to the right is a summary of what we know now. This is, of course, conditional on the continued downward trend of the infection rate and government guidance.



GUIDANCE SUMMARY

Based on the government guidance released on 2 July this is what we are planning:

- Treetops and Lower School – the pod concept will be increased. This means our classes can return as full year groups, and have the flexibility to create larger pods for a whole key stage experiences for example.
- Upper School (with specialist teachers) - the pods will be increased to incorporate 'whole year' pods. This will enable us to deliver lessons as per normal with full classes. Specialist teachers will be able to move between classes maintaining social distancing best practice.
- Some of the features from this term will need to remain, such as updated staggered timings and the one-way systems, as will a continued focus on hygiene and cleaning.
- Catering will remain as we have been running this term, but with puddings! We shall continue our online menu choices for the foreseeable future.
- Morning Break snacks need to be brought in either a clear plastic bag or snack box following our no nuts rule.
- Track and trace in schools will be a focus in line with Government guidance.

NEW INITIATIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

As part of our drive to ensure that all students have an uninterrupted educational experience with us, we are planning on providing every pupil in Year 3 and above their own touchscreen laptop.

We all know from the last three months that personal devices open the door to combining online study with face-to-face teaching and learning so the best of each is adopted. It can transform many areas of the education process: pupil agency and digital portfolios (how can I best showcase my learning?); collaboration (how can I develop my interpersonal skills when working with others in class and around the world); assessment and feedback (how can I learn from immediate and meaningful feedback?)



On a more practical level we need to ensure pupils are prepared should there be a need for remote learning next academic year; for example, due to a second peak of Coronavirus or the need to self-isolate. In addition, there may be a new scenario next year, with teachers self-isolating at home and delivering lessons remotely to students in classrooms. We need students to be on a level playing field and have access to a dedicated, suitable, safe and reliable device that can enrich their learning experience.



In addition our current stock of Laptops and tablets will be ever more available for use with our younger pupils throughout the school in lessons during the day.



NEW INITIATIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

1-2-1 Devices – How it will work

- The school will fund this in the next school year for the 2020/21 academic year.
- This device will be dedicated to school work at home and in the classroom
- It will be set up with software to make it age appropriate and safe, allowing support to be offered remotely, and ensuring all the required educational applications are included
- Devices will be insured so lost or broken devices are replaced quickly, and schools will have spares
- Investment in our infrastructure will be made over the summer and year ahead
- Teachers and students will have access to training and support materials to help them get the most benefit from the device and how it can contribute to a blended education
- We aim for devices to be rolled out from September – we will provide more details to follow on the exact timings
- The device we have chosen is a HP X360 because:
 - It's a 2-in-1 Laptop/Tablet; Flip and fold with 360° hinge
 - It's durable –it passed 19 US Military Spec durability and reliability tests
 - It has fast charging – 50% in 30 minutes
 - It has long battery life –10-14 hours for typical usage
 - It has dual web cams (screen cam plus keyboard cam for taking videos in tablet mode)
 - It has a full keyboard
 - It has a 13.3" Touchscreen: students can use their finger or a HP PRO Pen to digitally write



NEW INITIATIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

During the lockdown period we also took action to develop a number of other initiatives which have enabled us to lead the way in online learning and teaching and we intend to build on this next year.



- **Masterclasses** - our teachers have benefited from working with global experts on how to build curriculums that offer a **blended educational experience** and how we can approach **assessment** of student's progress in new ways. You will notice a shift toward Homework being posted on Teams for Year 3 upwards and Seesaw in Reception to Year 2.



- **Partnerships** - with innovative learning platforms that use artificial intelligence to create adaptive and personalised learning paths for students – more 'books' on our shared 'virtual bookshelf'



- **Wellbeing monitoring** – we introduced/will introduce **AS (Affective Social) Tracking**, an adolescent mental health tracking tool that enables schools to identify pupils' hidden risks early. This equips teachers with targeted action plans to reduce pupil mental health and wellbeing risks and is part of our global commitment to putting mental health and wellbeing at the centre of a well-balanced education.



- **Collecting the best content from our global family** - as a Group we are developing an online platform which will host bespoke content curated from our expert educationalists from across our 80 schools. It's early days for this exciting project so more to follow soon.

FAQS



WILL THERE STILL BE A FEE FREEZE FOR NEXT YEAR?

Yes. Given the exceptional circumstances, the economic situation and the value we place on our relationship with our parent cohort the usual annual percentage increase for this coming year will not be applied.

WILL BREAKFAST CLUB AND AFTER SCHOOL CLUB PROVISION BE OFFERED ?

Yes. We will have to manage this in Year Groups where able and the use of social distancing. You will be contacted during the holiday to arrange booking online once the plans are finalised.

WILL TRIPS AND VISITS BE ALLOWED?

Domestic trips are permitted, but not residential. Overseas trips are not yet permitted. We are not scheduling school trips straight away in order to plan effectively for a smooth return. We shall however, keep a sharp eye on Government advice on these topics as guidance changes frequently.

WILL SPORTS AND MATCHES RESUME?

Certain non-contact sports are approved and Games and PE will be part of the curriculum. We have made provisional bookings of matches, however, it is most likely that competitive matches will not resume straightaway in September.

Swimming will not resume in the Autumn Term.

WHAT ABOUT LOCAL LOCKDOWNS?

We are planning in detail what happens if the school needs to temporarily close in the case of an outbreak or localised lockdown. If the call comes we can respond quickly, following a pre-agreed plan.

WHAT ABOUT INFECTION CONTROL?

We will continue our robust cleaning regime next year and work closely with our cleaning staff to ensure every possible risk mitigation is taken. We are also reviewing our infection control procedures over the Summer to allow us to track confirmed or suspected cases and communicate with parents in the smoothest way possible inline with the Government Track and Trace protocol.

WILL THERE BE A STAGGERED DROP OFF AND PICK UP?

We have adapted this from the successful way this has worked this term and will be following the updated timings and instructions below:

Years 4, 5 and 6- Drop off at Kiss and drop (no use of carpark) at 8.20am Pick up 3.50pm

Years 1, 2 and 3- Drop off at 8.35 am (car park available). Pick up at 3.30

EKG, KG, Nursery and Reception- Drop off at 8.50am (car park available). Pick up at 3.30

The one way pedestrian system will remain in place in September and we will inform you of the specific drop off and pick up points in our communications before we return.

We continue to encourage you to park away from the school and walk in where possible.

**Breakfast club will run from 7.30 am
After School provision will continue
until 6.30pm**

FAQS continued



WILL CHILDREN BE BACK IN NORMAL UNIFORM?

Yes. In line with amended Government guidance we will return to our normal uniform rules from September.

WILL WHOLE-SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES, EVENTS & CONCERTS RETURN?

No. In line with Government guidance whole school assemblies, concerts and events will not resume in September. Choirs and singing in groups will not be possible when we return. We will monitor updates and plan to resume these when guidance allows.

HOW WILL MEET THE TEACHER AND OTHER EVENTS OCCUR ?

We will be setting up TEAMS live events in the first full week back. This will be led by each Year group and cover all of the usual aspects of the start of school- just online. Details about this will be shared nearer the time.

HOW WILL PARENTS' EVENINGS BE MANAGED?

Our first planned Parents' Evening will be scheduled in October for Year 6. This will be managed Via TEAMS with more details to follow nearer the time. We anticipate that further Parents' Evenings will be similarly organised in the Autumn Term

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AT THE START OF THE DAY?

If you or your child shows symptoms of Coronavirus, you should keep your child at home and notify the school of absence **via email office@duncombe-school.co.uk** Please put 'Absence' followed by your child's full name and class in the title of the email.

CAN MY CHILD BRING IN A BAG AND PENCIL CASE?

Yes, our usual school bags and small pencil case with our normal pens and pencils is fine. They will not be permitted to share these with their peers.

I HAVE CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE SCHOOL, WHAT DO I DO AT DROP OFF AND PICK UP?

Please follow the same principle as now. Drop off your eldest child first and then take your younger child(ren) to their drop off area.

For pick up, come at the later time and collect your youngest child(ren) first then your eldest.

WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Just as now, the use of social distancing along with regular hand hygiene and the 'catch it bin it kill it' approach will help to minimise transmission. We will require everyone to follow the signage carefully and parents will not be admitted into the school unless invited by a member of staff.

Please continue to make any enquiries using our email in the first instance.

RETURN TO SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

98% of parents agreed that the return to school process was well managed by the school

99% of parents agreed every possible risk mitigation that could have been taken was taken by the school

THANK YOU FOR THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- *Just a short note of sincere thanks to all at Duncombe for working out a way to get the children back to school. Our daughter came home this afternoon saying what an amazing time she had and how lovely it was to be back. I am sure the chance to go back will have a huge impact on the mental well being of all the children at Duncombe.*
- *We truly believe that Duncombe has done an amazing job with soldiering on through this crisis. Well done and Thankyou!*
- *Thank you for everything you and your team have done during this crisis. I think that you have all done an amazing job, and it makes me even happier with our choice of school for the boys. Getting them back before the summer holidays is nothing short of miraculous!! We have been kept well informed and had everything we need the whole way through and we couldn't have asked for more. We just wanted you to know how grateful we are to everyone at Duncombe.*