



SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

24 September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

PARENTAL UPDATE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

It has been a pleasure to visit over 25 lessons this week. Our staff are a talented and committed team, dedicated to doing the very best for all of our students. Every lesson has been calm, purposeful and focussed. Student and staff relationships are good and there is a clear sense of engagement and learning taking place. I have seen some truly outstanding practice and I think you always base your judgements on a school as to whether you would send your own children to it. I would be so happy if the staff at Summerhill were teaching my own children.

The behaviour of our students in lessons has been exemplary and the school has a calm and purposeful feel to it when you walk around during the day. Despite the ongoing uncertainty with Coronavirus and an unclear road map for the future, we will continue to do all we can to provide a quality education across our school community. It certainly appears that the 'new' normal will be here for a long time and we need to adapt to it to the best of our abilities. Whilst Coronavirus continues to dictate many of our day-to-day operations, we need to be continually relentless in our drive to make further improvements and excel in all we do.

CORONAVIRUS/ COVID19

As it stands, we have had 94 students off school since the start of autumn term, 47 either displayed Coronavirus symptoms or were tested, 43 have self-isolated due to close contact with symptomatic persons and 4 were in travel quarantine. 66 of these students have now returned to school. Therefore, we have 28 students off school today, related to Coronavirus. 14 students are being tested/awaiting a test and 14 are in isolation due to a close contact/family member with others awaiting a test/results. At present, we have no known positive cases within our school community.

NON-NEGOTIABLES

We rolled out a clear plan before lockdown of the 'non-negotiables' of being a Summerhill student and how these positively impact the running of the school and the education we deliver. As I have said, since I joined the school, I believe that a true community school is a partnership between staff, students, parents and community stakeholders. Working together, we can ensure that students enjoy school, make good progress and leave as responsible, well qualified, mature and ready to make a valuable contribution to society. We will continue to have the highest of expectations in all aspects of school life, both on-site and in the local community. These expectations are based on traditional values, underpinned by honesty, integrity and transparency in the way we do things.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – LOCAL COMMUNITY

Whilst behaviour in school has been exemplary from the start of term, we have unfortunately, had several members of the public contact us to complain about some student conduct on the way to and from school. This has a tremendously negative impact on the reputation of the school and whilst it is a very small minority of students, it affects the whole perception of our school community. Therefore, can I please ask that you remind your child(ren) that any anti-social or inappropriate behaviour does not go unseen and is very easily recognised due to the nature of our easily identifiable uniform. Anyone who is known to be causing issues will be sanctioned and parents contacted. There have been particular issues in Cot Lane Park, in the surrounding fields and in a couple of the neighbouring streets. This is not acceptable and will not be tolerated as it brings the school into disrepute. Please also continue to reinforce social distancing at all times.

ATTENDANCE

We are aware of the current situation with Coronavirus will, no doubt, have an adverse effect on attendance at school some of the time. The statutory guidance states that all students should be in school during the autumn to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wider development and well-being. Any student who is affected by Coronavirus will receive an 'X' code, which is authorised absence. The government have made it clear that schools are expected to follow the normal processes, which will include penalty notices and court proceedings for non-attendance that is not Coronavirus related. For any students who are out of school due to Coronavirus, we will set work on Satchel One.

PUNCTUALITY

The warning bell sounds at 8.35am and we would encourage all students to be in school at this time. Whilst we appreciate that at times lateness is unavoidable due to unforeseen circumstances, any student now arriving late three times, without reasonable explanation, will receive an after-school detention.

UNIFORM

The majority of our students look fabulous! We have a smart, fun and colourful school uniform that helps our students to look smart, feel proud and celebrate their House allegiances. Smart uniform is an absolute non-negotiable for all students. Unfortunately, a small minority of students do not always comply with our requirements. Daily uniform checks will take place so please ensure your child has the expected uniform at all times. Skirts continue to cause us an issue and these should be of a suitable length, no more than 6cm above the knee. This is as much about modesty as well as school policy and non-compliance will be challenged. Where uniform falls below the expected standard, due a lack of appropriate clothing or footwear, negative points will be applied to Class Charts and parents notified. Please be aware that three negative behaviour points leads to a detention. Shoes should be totally black, polishable, with no defining logos or tags.

HOODIES AND PE KIT

On days when students have a practical PE lesson, they should come to school in PE kit rather than normal school uniform. In addition to their normal PE kit, students should wear a pair of plain black or navy blue tracksuit/jogging bottoms. Students must wear the tracksuit/jogging bottoms around school. Students wearing PE kit must also wear the tracksuit/jogging bottoms on the way to/from school. These do not have to be Summerhill-branded or purchased from the Sports Shop. A small logo is ok (eg smaller than a credit card) but larger logos or stripes are not. Apart from the tracksuit trousers/jogging bottoms, students must not wear items that are not part of their PE kit or normal school uniform. We are aware that tracksuit/jogging bottoms are currently in short supply, but would be grateful if these could be sourced by October half term.

From Monday 28 September, we are requesting that branded hoodies are NOT worn for school. House hoodies are acceptable as 'outer' clothing, or alternatively, school jumpers and/or jackets can be worn. Students wearing any alternatively branded hoodies around the building will be asked to remove them.

POSITIVE POINTS

Our Class Charts system is becoming more refined and I would actively encourage you to regularly check your child's behaviour and reward points. We now have clear expectations of outstanding behaviour at all times and many students need to be congratulated on this. With a drive to ensure more consistency, our positive points are now based on our core values of CARE – Courage, Ambition, Respect and Effort. Students are specifically rewarded for 'above and beyond' conduct. We are also introducing a new range of CARE badges for students to wear in house colours, which will be awarded once certain thresholds of points are accumulated.

YEAR 11 REVISION SESSIONS

We have already started Year 11 revision sessions this year, much earlier than previously. I am aware that we have had many students who want to join these sessions and Mr Quirke is currently revising the plans to ensure we can meet the needs of all students.

STAFF EMAILS

Email addresses for staff can be found on the school website. Any curriculum enquiries should be directed to the relevant staff who will respond in due course. Our staff wellbeing charter does not expect staff to respond to any emails outside of normal working hours.

Thank you for your help, support and co-operation with all aspects of school life. Thank you also for the lovely emails of support sent in at this time. They are very much appreciated, in what is, at times, a very crazy world!

Have a lovely weekend.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Palfreyman
Headteacher