

RETURN TO SCHOOL – AUGUST 2020

After an incredibly difficult and challenging few months, we are now at a point where we are preparing ourselves for a return to school next Wednesday 12 August. I do hope that everyone has managed to enjoy the shorter-than-normal summer holiday as much as possible and that our pupils have been able to switch off, relax and rest to help prepare for the new term ahead.

Staff are very much looking forward to getting back into the building and seeing our young people once again after such a long time away from school. However, I am also acutely aware of the worry and anxiety that may exist amongst staff, pupils and parents/carers about returning to school.

It has been an ever-changing landscape since we entered lockdown back in March and there has been lots of information and detail coming from various quarters both locally and nationally. I would anticipate that this will continue over the coming weeks and months.

As always, I will endeavour to keep you posted with the most relevant information as we receive it. Included in this newsletter is some information that I would encourage you to take the time to read carefully and also share with your child prior to their return next Wednesday.

Return to School

Staff return to school on Monday 10 August. All pupils will return to school at 8.50am on Wednesday 12 August and will follow their normal timetable; individual timetables were emailed to pupils and parents/carers in June.

During periods 1 and 2 on Wednesday morning, pupils in all year groups will remain with their registration tutor to undertake some activities to reflect upon the experiences of the last few months. After such a long period away from school under difficult circumstances, it is important that pupils have the opportunity to discuss their experiences and also the worries and concerns that may remain.

This time with registration tutors will also be an opportunity for staff to reinforce and explain some of the changes that we have put in place within Dumfries High School to work towards keeping everyone as safe as possible.

Pupil and Staff Safety

A four-day deep clean of Dumfries High School will be taking place prior to staff and pupils returning. In addition to this, cleaning teams will remain in school each and every day when pupils return next Wednesday to undertake regular cleaning of 'high-touch' areas such as door handles, railings and bannisters, toilets and tables and chairs within the dining area.

Sanitising stations have been erected around the school and we request that every pupil carries this out when entering the building. Pupils who are unable to use sanitising liquids on their skin must wash their hands thoroughly in line with requirements.

I would ask for your help and support to ensure that all pupils are sent to school with a small bottle of sanitising gel to use at the start and end of each lesson in addition to any other time during the day when they feel it appropriate.

Alcohol wipes have been provided within every classroom and pupils will be requested to wipe down their work station at the beginning and end of each lesson. Dispensing bins have also been provided to discard wipes appropriately.

Pupils can wear a mask if they wish to do so; some staff may choose to do the same. Depending upon the nature of the classroom activity, some staff may wear a protective face shield on occasion.

Lunchtime Provision

The canteen at DHS will continue to provide lunches for those pupils that wish to purchase and remain in school. Initially only cold meals and snacks will be provided as the catering team work towards introducing the full menu including hot meals that they would normally provide.

As in previous years, our new S1 pupils must remain on campus. Pupils in all other year groups can leave the schools grounds during lunchtime. However, the wearing of masks and adherence to social distancing must be followed by all pupils during lunchtime when entering shops and food outlets.

To assist with the planning of the recovery phase of schooling, all four Dumfries secondary schools have agreed to reduce the length of lunch by 10 minutes. Lunchtime now lasts between 1.05pm and 1.45pm (warning bell at 1.40pm). *This means that the end of the school day will now be 3.15pm.*

School Uniform

There has been no change to this whatsoever and the expectation that all DHS pupils wear the correct and appropriate uniform remains exactly the same. Staff are looking forward to seeing all of our young people back in school with their uniforms. Blazer orders can be collected from the main office on Monday and Tuesday of next week; we would ask parents/carers to ring the buzzer and wait at the front door to allow a member of office staff to assist you.

Be Prepared for School

When pupils arrive at school next Wednesday morning, they must do so ready for learning with all appropriate equipment; to do so is more important now than ever. As well as bringing a small bottle of sanitiser, each student should bring a fully stocked pencil case for their learning. Importantly this will reduce the need for equipment to be shared within classrooms.

Networking Pupils

Pupils in S4/5/6 who 'network' to another school or college must report to Dumfries High School first thing on Wednesday morning and not go elsewhere. Confirmation of networking arrangements will be issued to the relevant pupils next Wednesday.

School Drop-Offs and Collections

In line with guidance provided, I would ask all parents/carers not to bring their vehicle into the school grounds from this point. Drop-offs at the beginning of the school day and collections at the end of the school day must take place outwith the school grounds. Bane Loaning (at the front of the school) is a narrow busy area so it may be advisable to arrange drop-offs and collections at another point away from the school. Thank you for your help and understanding with this. The bus circle at the back of the school must also be kept clear of vehicles at all times.

Useful Links

The links below will give further information about the return of schools in Dumfries and Galloway next Wednesday:

<https://supportdg.dumgal.gov.uk/article/21014/Re-opening-of-schools>

<https://supportdg.dumgal.gov.uk/article/21023/FAQ-s-Re-opening-of-Schools>

After such a lengthy period of absence from school, it is vital that all pupils return to the good habits and routines that were present prior to lockdown. There will be changes to the way that we must all conduct ourselves within the school building and when in the school community; it is important that each and every pupil follows the instruction and guidance in a manner that is respectful and considerate of others.

Once again I would please ask for your help and support to speak with your child prior to returning to school to reinforce the importance of what is required; more than ever, our school values of *Ambition* and *Respect* must be demonstrated at all times so we can support each other upon our return to the school building.

I hope that you have found the information included in this update helpful and that it can go some way to reassuring everyone about the new term ahead starting next Wednesday. Updates and further information will continue to be sent as we receive it.

Take care and stay safe





NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2020

After a difficult few months, it has been absolutely wonderful to welcome our pupils back into Dumfries High School this week. The way in which our young people have conducted themselves and engaged with their learning under the most difficult of circumstances in recent months has been terrific. In addition to their own individual drive and focus, it is a great reflection of the support that they have received from parents/carers and staff within the school during the sustained period away from the building.

There was a genuine buzz of excitement around the school on Wednesday morning when pupils returned, but I also appreciate that this would have been mixed with some worry and concern given the nature of our experiences over recent months.

That said, it was lovely to see the smiling faces of our pupils as they returned to Dumfries High School for the start of this academic year. I never tire of saying how proud I am of our young people, but the resilience, determination and positivity that they have shown this year is a credit to themselves and their families; I am sure we are all equally as proud.

Keeping Ourselves and Each Other Safe (Covid-19)

When pupils returned to school this week, they were informed of a number of measures that have been put in place to ensure that we all work together to look after ourselves and each other taking account of both local and national guidance.

Regular hand washing, sanitising, a one-way system, zoned areas within the dining areas, cleaning work stations are amongst a number of steps introduced to reduce risk within Dumfries High School. We are strongly encouraging pupils to go outside for fresh air during interval and lunch to reduce the number of people within the building. These continue to be strange and uncertain times and I would to thank everyone for your understanding, help and support as we start the new academic year; it is very much appreciated.

SQA Exam Results 2020

As you may have seen earlier this week, John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced that all downgraded results will be withdrawn and pupils will be awarded the estimates grades as submitted by teachers.

We will be contacting all parents/carers of the DHS pupils that this affects to notify them of their estimate grades. SQA will confirm amended grades with schools no later than Friday 21 August. The withdrawal of the SQA exams this year for the first time in history added a significant pressure and stress to both pupils, parents/carers and teachers alike. I would however, like to both congratulate and thank everyone involved for their efforts to support our young people during an already difficult period in their lives.

Please note that all subject course changes for our senior pupils have been completed today (Friday 14 August); can I suggest that you confirm all courses for study with your child so you are fully aware of the subject and level that they are working towards examination in this year. It is anticipated that The Scottish Government and SQA will make an announcement about the 2021 exam diet in due course.

Sixth Year Arrangements

S6 pupils will this year be allowed to sign-out of school during the day if they so wish when they do not have a timetabled class. Study areas have been created in the main hall for senior pupils taking into account physical distancing; pupils must sit in the allocated seats. It is crucial that pupil's sign-in and sign-out of school during the day as appropriate to ensure office staff have an accurate record of pupil attendance. This will continue to be reviewed throughout the year.

Senior pupils who have chosen a Foundation Apprenticeship or a course at D&G College should note that delivery will be online for the duration of term one.

Staff Update

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new staff joining Dumfries High School and also those who are returning:

Nikki Blackwell (Modern Languages), Sue Maher (Maths) and Holly Little (Music) have joined Dumfries High School on a permanent basis.

Lauren Wilson (English), Lauren McWhirter (Home Economics) and Heather Brown (English) who were Probationer teachers with us last session, have now joined the DHS teaching staff on a permanent basis.

Lauren Moffat (Art) is a Probationer teacher with us this year having previously been with us on a teaching placement.

Stuart Douglas (PE) comes into the school for a period of one year working alongside the PE team.

Following a secondment with D&G Council, Ian Houston (Physics) returns to Dumfries High School.

Katy Barr, Theresa Taylor-Burn, Carol Balfour and Ruth Johnson all join our Removing Barriers to Learning team to help our young people in classes across the school.

Time of the School Day

Our school day begins at 8.50am and pupils should ensure they are in registration by this time. Morning registration finishes at 9am each day and during this important information and announcements will be shared with pupils. This is also a time for pupils to focus and prepare themselves for the lessons they are about to attend. Please ensure your child is in school no later than 8.50am to attend morning registration.

As communicated previously, please note that the school day now finishes at 3.15pm. The seven 45 minute lessons remain, but lunchtime has been cut by 10 minutes (1.05pm – 1.45pm) in line with the other burgh secondary schools.

DHS 'House' Contacts

All pupils at Dumfries High School belong to a 'House' - Buccleuch, Caerlaverock or Devorgilla. If you have any concerns or queries the following people are the relevant contacts:

| | Buccleuch | Caerlaverock | Devorgilla |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Pupil Support | Debbie Holmes | Fiona Bryce/James Kidd | Jan Kilmurry |
| Depute Headteacher | Billy Davidson | Daniella Hogg | Kenny Pullen |

Parent/Carer Contact

As part of our Covid response, I would encourage parents/carers to contact the school via telephone, email or our social media platforms. If there is a need to meet and discuss issues with a member of staff, please make an appointment in advance so we can arrange a mutually suitable time. (Telephone: 01387 – 263061, Email: gw08officedumfries@ea.dumgal.sch.uk)

Pupil Absence

If a child is ill and will therefore not be attending school, could I please ask that you contact the main office as soon as possible on the day of absence to inform the school. This is an important step to help us update our records as quickly as possible. Our specific absence line is as follows: 01387 – 702799.

New Term Dates 2020/2021

Due to the earlier than scheduled return to school in August, there has been changes to a few holiday dates for the year ahead. These are listed on both the school website and D&G Council website; please check these carefully.

Data Capture Forms

It is important that all information we hold in school relating to each individual pupil is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Data Capture Forms and various consent forms will be sent home next week. Please read these carefully, complete the relevant parts and return them to the school office no later than **Friday 28 August**.

Free School Meals/Clothing Grants/EMA

Forms for parents/carers wishing to apply for free school meals and/or a clothing grant can be collected from the main school office. An electronic version is also available on our website or at the following address: <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15246/School-clothing-grants>.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) forms and guidance notes will also available at the main office. In relation to EMA, a fresh application must be made each academic year and submitted with all documentation needed to complete the assessment.

Parent Council

The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place on Thursday 20 August at 6pm. This will be an online 'Zoom' meeting. If you would like to take part in this meeting, please contact the Parent Council Chair Lorrie Kyle: lorriekyle@btconnect.com or 07859939895. A strong Parent Council can have a huge impact upon a school community and we are keen that as many new members join and support the work of the group.

Physical Education

Following a Health and Safety visit this morning, I can confirm that pupils are now able to use changing facilities within the PE department. I fully appreciate that the experiences during the last three days has caused some unrest due to the lack of changing, activities undertaken and the incredibly hot weather on Wednesday and Thursday; a huge thanks for your patience and understanding with this complex situation.

However, following advice and guidance taken today we are now able to reintroduce changing for our pupils both before and after PE lessons. For the foreseeable future, Government advice states that PE lessons should in the main be delivered outside and pupils should ensure that they bring appropriate PE kit.

Pupils will be given clear instructions by PE staff about the necessary do's and don'ts during PE lessons in line with guidance received.

Mobile Phones and/or Headphones

Pupils are very aware that mobile phones and/or headphones must be switched off and out of sight at all times in class unless a specific instruction has been given by a staff member when they may be used to aid learning and teaching.

Mobile phones and/or headphones must also be switched off and out of sight in corridors. These may be confiscated from any pupil who fails to follow this instruction which is in place to reduce distractions and disruptions to learning and teaching.

School Lunches

Please note that a limited hot meal option will now be available from the school cafeteria as of Monday 17 August. The range of hot meals available will increase over the coming days and weeks; cold meals and snacks will continue to be available.

'Meal Deal' options at the school cafeteria are available to pupils each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for only £1 as part of the Government's 'Eat Out to Help Out' initiative.

Litter in The Community

As we begin the new term, I once again have to raise the issue of litter in and around the Dumfries High School community. Already this week I have received calls from residents in the surrounding areas who are concerned about the increase in litter now that term has started again.

Please speak with your child about the importance of disposing of litter appropriately and the fact that we all have to take responsibility to improve this ongoing concern.

Information Evenings

Normally at this time we would be busy preparing for a series of events for parents/carers in all year groups to help us plan and work together throughout the year. During the first term leading to the October break, information evenings would be held for S1, S2 and S3 year groups. In addition to this, we would normally hold a 'How to Pass' evening for S4 and similar events for S5/6 pupils as our learners prepare for SQA exams next year.

However, we are unable to proceed with these events as normal as a result of the restrictions that are in place about gatherings. We are currently looking at ways in which we can replicate such events to help share important messages and information about the school year ahead and further detail will be issued in due course.

Clubs/Activities/Study Support/Trips

As you will be aware, staff at Dumfries High School offer an extensive and varied range of clubs, activities, study support sessions and trips through the year which helps to give pupils a range of experiences to support their learning and also their wellbeing.

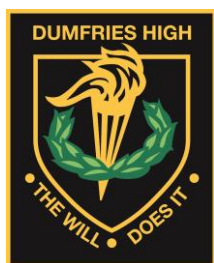
At this point these have all been suspended, but things will continue to be monitored over the coming weeks. As the situation changes and guidance reflects this, schools will begin to reintroduce many of the great extra-curricular experiences that our pupils benefit from each and every year.

Finally, I would once again like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the support that all parents/carers have shown in a variety of ways over recent months and more recently as we have prepared our young people for their return to school.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school if there is anything you would like to discuss. The staff at Dumfries High School are looking forward to the year ahead, and with your help we can continue to support our young people to ensure they continue to progress in all that they do.

Best wishes and stay safe





NEWSLETTER AUGUST UPDATE 2020

After a few weeks back at school, it is important to reflect on the measures that we implemented at the start of term to ensure that staff and pupil safety remains a priority as we go about our business in school each day. With 800 pupils and 100 staff in the building on a daily basis, it is important that we review processes at an early stage and adapt things as appropriate.

These are *not* normal times and as such it is important that we act accordingly. Please note the following information and changes:

Face Coverings

Following the announcement of the First Minister, face coverings will become mandatory for pupils and staff in corridors, the communal area of the school (dining area / assembly hall) and on school buses from *Monday 31 August*. Please ensure that your child is provided with an appropriate mask or face covering.

Should your child be exempt from wearing a mask or face covering, this must be communicated with the relevant Depute Headteacher by Monday morning.

Any pupil who forgets or loses their face mask or face covering must collect a disposable mask from their registration tutor and ensure they continue to wear it when required.

Hand Sanitising

Pupils are required to hand sanitise on entry to the school building – most commonly, at the start of the day, the end of interval and the end of lunch. To further assist with this, staff will monitor the entry of pupils to the school at each doorway and their use of hand sanitising stations at each of the four entrances to the school.

The above procedures have been outlined to pupils in registration classes this morning and I would be grateful if you could reinforce these important messages.

Social Distancing

To further reduce the opportunities for the transmission of COVID 19 in our communal areas, please note the following changes which will also take effect as from Monday 31 August:

Dry Weather

Pupils will only be granted permission to enter the school building from 8.35am onwards. Pupils are welcome to be in the school grounds prior to this time, but they cannot access the building.

Pupils will spend interval and lunchtime outdoors. There will continue to be the opportunity for pupils to purchase snacks and lunch from the canteen. However, once purchased pupils will be asked to consume food and drinks outside.

Wet Weather

Pupils will be permitted to enter the communal area of the school building on arrival.

Pupils will be permitted to spend interval and lunchtime in the communal area of the school – in the zone designated for their year group. To help with social distancing, pupils in S5 & S6 will have their own designated area in the viewing gallery of the David Keswick Centre.