



Sunday 6th September, 2020.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We're thrilled to be able to welcome pupils back to school tomorrow. The staff have undertaken some extremely productive INSET days across Thursday and Friday ensuring that plans are in place which enable us to operate at full capacity in line with guidance from the Department of Education; and ensuring that we're in a good place to continue to drive further improvement at the school.

I know there has been a small number of parents enquiring about the decision to ask pupils not to access the school via the footpath at the rear of the school and about our change requiring rucksack style bags for all pupils.

Whilst I'm sure most of the reasons for these changes are fairly obvious in the current climate, I thought it'd be useful to detail some of our rationale beyond that already published in the information issued to parents on the 24th of August.

Firstly, in relation to the footpath, we know that this decision causes some pupils a slight inconvenience in terms of travelling to school. Google maps tells us that travelling to the front gates of school via St Mary's Road from outside the Woodlands pub rather than via the public footpath adds 8 mins to a pupils' journey time to school if on foot. This also means they have to walk an extra 800 meters compared to the route via the footpath.

There are many things that are having to be withdrawn because guidance dictates we can't operate as we normally would. Assemblies, particular sporting activities, cross-year enrichment activities and some school trips/activities have all had to be removed from plans. This is not because we want to penalise pupils but because our operation during this period has to change, this is, of course, frustrating in many ways.

This year, there is a huge amount of change required in order to be able to operate on full capacity and in line with the guidance issued to school. We've taken the decision to ensure that absolutely everything has been considered to maximise our mitigation of risk so that we cannot only do what we can to manage the situation in school but also support any potential transmission in the local community; especially as pupils will, in some cases, be accessing vulnerable family members.

Regardless of the evident health risks of COVID-19, a spike in infections on a local level will likely lead to impact on either individual pupils or groups of pupils which will result in further disruption to their education, something we all want to avoid.

The public footpath is a useful access point for school but it's also an extremely narrow path and often causes "bottlenecking", particularly where this navigates between houses on Highfield Avenue. This is particularly an issue when pupils travelling to school are met by members of the public accessing the path in the opposite direction towards Great Sankey.

Our initial plan is comprehensive in managing risk, but there are many aspects that we feel we'll be able to amend as we grow into the year. An example, of course, is the move away from packed lunches to hot food service after a few weeks of opening and a new method of pupils ordering their food in advance. The footpath too is something that we will review, especially as we move into the winter months.

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THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

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AMBASSADOR SCHOOL





There are several reasons we've specifically asked pupils to bring rucksack style bags this year. Firstly, the guidance to schools for safe operation, which is our priority, makes it difficult to share resources between individuals as we would have in the past. There are several things we must do before pupils can use a resource previously used by another group. I'm sure you can appreciate; this can slow the process of learning down and so we've thought carefully about how we can frame learning for pupils, producing resources that can be personal to them.

We've therefore produced booklets for each module that a pupil would take in the majority of their subjects. These booklets will also aid pupils with any remote learning they need to undertake on an individual basis or, in a worst-case scenario, because of further school closure.

Pupils will therefore have a number of resources that they will need to have on their possession and ones that they will need to keep in good order. We've seen that several our girls have had to work with knowledge organisers and other resources that become damaged because they're being placed in handbags and bags not really appropriate for school. The lack of space in some of these bags has also meant that they haven't been able to bring a full quota of equipment to school; more than ever this will be crucial as pupils won't be able to share equipment this year. So we wanted to prevent these problems, rather than react to them a few weeks into term.

We are also aware that pupils who bring handbag style bags to school tend to bring an additional bag to school on the day that they have PE. With pupils also being asked to bring packed lunch to school in the first 2 weeks, initially, this will be another item that will consume space in a pupil's bag, possibly requiring an additional bag to be brought to school. Ideally, with a rucksack, pupils will be able to bring more equipment in the one bag reducing the number of bags that they are bringing into school - especially those using public transport. Here, our goal is to minimise the number of items that pupils bring when travelling to and from school which can act as surfaces that can potentially be contaminated.

At this stage, we're asking for support from parents to help us manage what is a unusual situation for staff and pupils. Staff reported that they are confident with the comprehensive level of planning, detail and clarity of the changes put in place in response to the guidance issued to schools.

We're asking that parents recognise the amount of change that both pupils and staff will have to get used to and support us by allowing us, in the first few weeks, to focus on supporting pupils to get used to some changes to their usual experience of school. As previously stated, we will be reviewing all practices regularly and where we can change or relax certain measures but maintain the same degree of safety of operation we will do so.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Carlin.

Principal.

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