

15th July 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians

I hope everyone continues to be safe and well and that you are enjoying the start of the summer holidays. We have been preparing detailed plans to welcome all boys back in September for some time now and I thought it was important that I shared our current thinking with you and attach a summary of our planning documents so that you can see what the proposals actually look like. However, please be aware that the only thing I can guarantee is that these plans will change as new guidance is released. I will send out an updated version nearer the start of term.

I have been meeting with staff twice a week in order to plan effectively for September. We will continue to meet as a staff throughout the holidays and have an additional INSET day planned in September in order to ensure we are fully prepared for the return of the boys. This will be during the school holidays. Boarders will be expected back on Monday 7th September. However, this will be slightly earlier than usual so that we can stagger their arrival. Currently, we are planning to request for Year 11s to return first, between 12.00pm and 1.15pm. This allows us to brief them on the boarding procedures we have designed to keep boys safe and will mean they will be able to support each other and younger students. It also allows us to offer 'catch up' for boys in Year 11 who need it. Year 7s are currently expected back between 1.30pm and 2.45pm. Again, this is to give us time to help them to settle in and to run through key safety measures with them. We are then hoping to ask for Year 8s to return between 4.30pm and 5.30pm and for Year 9s to return between 6.00pm and 7.00pm. This allows us to work with each year group in turn, to go through procedures that prioritise their safety and wellbeing.

Out-boarders are expected to return to Brymore on Tuesday 8th September. Things are moving rapidly but the collective mood of staff is one of wishing to offer as much of the normal Brymore experience as possible whilst keeping the boys safe. All lessons will continue as normal as will most activities however we will be guided by the National Governing Bodies when it comes to sport.

Our overriding philosophy is one of keeping the boys clean and minimising contact with others. Boys will be expected to use hand sanitiser at the start and end of every lesson and we will stagger breaks and lunchtimes so that not all boys are socialising at the same time and will need to remain in their year groups. We will be running after school activities but where possible they will be offered to out-boarders before tea and boarders afterwards. Again I will write nearer the end of the holidays to outline how this will work in more detail.

There is considerable national concern about the amount of learning that has been lost as a result of Covid-19 and in particular the gaps in learning between some students and others that will have been further widened over the past few months. I am well aware many of you have struggled with home schooling and that it was becoming a point of conflict within many families. Inevitably this has created a situation where every boy in the school, and every child nationally, is at a different stage of their learning, which is an obvious challenge for teachers at this time. We realise that this challenge will not go away in September and staff are currently planning their 'recovery' curriculums; what to teach and when, in order to catch the boys up as quickly as possible. My biggest concern is the new Year 11 boys, as they have less time (around two terms) to catch up. Ofqual are currently consulting with schools about what, if anything, can be left out of subject exams.

One of the reasons the exam results at Brymore continue to be so high year on year is that staff give up much of their time, running additional sessions before and after school, often in small groups to target the learning more precisely. We have already started to plan these for September and we will share them with you via the parent bulletin in the normal way. The new Year 11 are the first year group to do one fewer option, which means that they have benefitted from an additional lesson in the remaining option subjects. They will therefore have one fewer subject to revise for and have already benefitted from increased teaching time. Year 11 will also have two additional lessons timetabled on Friday afternoons, in order to provide additional teaching time.

I would like to thank everyone connected with Brymore for their hard work and continued support over the past few months. The support from parents has been overwhelming and I know it has helped staff as they have battled with the demands of online lessons, lessons in school, phoning home regularly and in many cases, home schooling themselves. There cannot be many schools whose office team wanted to be part of tutorials in order to support the boys, whose staff embraced online 'live' lessons so quickly, where colleagues have volunteered to keep contacting some families in their holidays, have requested planning meetings in their holidays and have agreed to start back earlier than usual. The collective effort from the whole of the Brymore family has been outstanding and I wish everyone a restful summer holiday, without the need for home schooling. No new work is now being set. However, Year 10 do need to ensure that they return in Year 11 with the work that has been set, completed.

Finally, we should be releasing a recording of our annual awards ceremony later this week, which is a celebration of the hard work of the boys throughout this year. For those that have won awards, certificates will be posted home and those that have won cups will have them displayed in the trophy cabinet.

Please be assured, updated plans will be sent home again towards the end of the holiday, as we continue to react to the changing guidance. In the meantime, if you have any concerns, please contact me at MThomas4@educ.someset.gov.uk

Thank you all once again and I look forward to welcoming all the boys back in September.

Mark Thomas
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