



# THE COWPLAIN SCHOOL

**Headteacher**

Mr IR Gates MA NPQH

July 2020

Dear Parent

Firstly, I hope you and your family are well.

We are hugely looking forward to your child starting secondary school with us at The Cowplain School in September. Unfortunately, we all know that it must be, at first, a different experience to one that we would expect for a new Year 7 in any previous year.

I am therefore writing to you to explain how we will implement the government's guidance and protocols for the wider reopening of schools when your child starts on Thursday 3 September 2020. I apologise for the length of this letter but there is a lot of information to digest! I have tried to keep it as brief as possible and have included only the essential information you need. I am also aware that some of you will not perhaps know the layout of the school and how we operate as much as parents whose children are already in the school.

To recap, the government expect full attendance of all children when the new term begins, with the rationale being that this is appropriate given the reduced amount of infections of the Covid-19 virus. To achieve this, the emphasis is now not on social distancing, but on a system of controls that all schools should implement. Of course, this has represented a significant logistical operation for the school and there are many adjustments we have to make.

The controls focus on five main areas so that:

- 1 those showing symptoms of the virus do not attend school or are sent home immediately should symptoms occur;
- 2 robust hand and respiratory hygiene is adhered to;
- 3 enhanced cleaning is in place;
- 4 the school and individuals engage with the NHS Test and Trace system; and
- 5 the school considers how to reduce contacts and ensures social distancing where possible.

Whilst the first few points are reasonably self-explanatory, and which I would like to assure you the school will fully implement, I would like to focus on point 5 which involves the most challenging logistical changes for us all. To reduce contacts and maximise social distancing where possible, I will outline a number of strategies we will employ that will affect your child.

## Section A: Minimising Contact Between Groups

### 1 Learning Communities

To reduce the number of 'contacts' with other people a child may experience in any day, the guidance recommends that children are taught in 'bubbles' that can be up to a year group in size, so whilst children stay in one place, teachers will move between classes.

Therefore, each year group will be allocated a 'learning community' in the school and will receive all their lessons in that community's zone, as follows:

Year Group	Learning Community Zone
7	English area
8	Maths area
9	half of Languages/E& P corridor/west facing Science rooms
10	half of Languages/E&P corridor/east facing Science rooms
11	Geography/Tech blocks

Further to this, Year 7 children will be in reduced 'bubbles' within the year group and so will remain in one group for all their lessons. Your child will, of course, be familiar with staying in one group as he/she will have experienced this throughout his/her time at primary school.

Year 7 will generally be taught in standard classrooms which will be resourced with the necessary equipment, ie drawing materials for Art. All children will have access to PE, although this will be a combination of physical activity and theory lessons, as well as ICT lessons using the computers.

Pastoral Leader for Year 7, Mr Smart, will be based in the Year 7 Learning Community, as will senior staff. Access to Matron and other key support staff will also, of course, be available to all students.

### 2 Arriving and Leaving School

To ensure that children from different year groups mix as infrequently as possible, they must arrive and leave at different times. Therefore, the start and finishing times for each year group are as follows:

Year Group	Arrive	Leave
7	8.20am	2.20pm
8	8.40am	2.40pm
9	8.30am	2.30pm
10	8.50am	2.50pm
11	9.00am	3.30pm (3.00pm Thursdays due to meetings/parents' evenings etc)

Year 7 children who catch the bus will be supervised in school until escorted to the bus. Any child catching the bus will be asked to sit with his/her year group and not mix with other years. At this point we are seeking clarification from the bus company as to the wearing of masks on the bus and will let you know about this in due course.

We do, of course, understand that children living with siblings will sometimes need to travel to school together but we ask that you and they work within the guidelines above as much as possible.

Children should not arrive more than a few minutes early and should go straight to their learning community and wait for their lesson, avoiding other year groups. Children must not wait on the playground.

If your child cycles to school, which we would encourage, he/she should cycle directly to his/her designated learning community where an area to lock his/her bike will be provided. It is essential that your child brings a secure lock.

Should you wish to drop off/collect your child from school by car, the drop off/collection area for all students will be the area located near the nursery/old tennis courts, accessible through the west of Hart Plain entrance. Access will not be available through the road past the school reception. Parents should not wait with their children in cars on the school site and must not get out of their cars.

On arrival to school, each student will be expected to wash and/or sanitise their hands.

### **3 Break Times**

Break times will be split so only two or three year groups are on break at any point. Year 7 will have their own servery, located in their own learning community, and do not need to visit the dining room at all. You will be able to set up an online account, which means your child does not need to bring cash to school, and he/she will be issued with a contactless card.

### **4 Equipment and Uniform**

Please ensure your child has the basic minimum requirements for school, ie pen, pencil, ruler, etc as it will be more difficult for staff to issue equipment. Any equipment used by your child must not be shared. Similarly, it is vital your child has the correct uniform as, again, we cannot always guarantee we can loan uniform. It may be we have to call you to drop the correct uniform into school or send your child home to change if he/she is not wearing the correct uniform.

### **5 Toilets**

Year 7s will have their own designated toilets.

### **6 Visitors to the School Site**

Visitors to the school site, including parents, will be kept to a minimum and will be advised not to come in during the core hours that children are here (8.20am-3.30pm). We have always prided ourselves on having an 'open door' policy and a friendly reception; sadly, however, during this time, parents must not attend the school without an appointment.

### **7 Extra-Curricular Activities**

We are hoping to continue to run as many extra-curricular activities as possible, which of course will be year group specific. Some cannot run at the moment, ie Pompey in The Community, if they mix year groups. We will be in touch with more details in the September. Mrs Everritt will also write to parents separately about arrangements for the breakfast club.

## **Section B: Curriculum and Behaviour**

### **1 Curriculum**

We are very pleased to say that we are able to offer a full curriculum for all students over the next year, which we think is very important. We have incorporated extra literacy support and a focus on reading in our reflection time periods as well as slightly increasing the number of English lessons in Year 7.

### **2 Behaviour**

Many visitors, parents, and staff comment on the excellent behaviour of our students; we know this isn't by chance, we work hard to instil this in our children, as do you. Most of our students want to behave well and concentrate on their learning without distraction, and we have supported this aim by a focus on good behaviour with strategies such as the implementation of our Learning Room 18+ months ago. Of course, we will provide extensive support to those who need it through our pastoral team, but we are expecting all children to behave well; this is even more important at this stage as all those who work or attend the school will need to follow more protocols than normal and it is vital they do so to keep everyone safe. Therefore, we will not tolerate poor behaviour; we have amended our Behaviour Policy to take into account the current situation and will continue with the Learning Room, which will be zoned into year groups, although we will not operate the 30 minutes after school due to the need to release children at staggered times. Teachers, yourselves and myself have enough to do without having to become involved in dealing with silly behaviour and I would ask you to please emphasise this to your child, as well as impressing on him/her that following the rules and instructions of staff is vitally important; I will take a very hard line with anyone who does not do so.

### **Summary**

I trust the information above provides you with enough detail to understand the arrangements for your child in September. There has been a great deal of planning over the last couple of weeks to ensure the school will operate effectively and work will continue over the summer holidays, especially to the site. An updated Risk Assessment will take into account the new guidance and will be available on our website before the end of August.

When school resumes in September, we will, of course, spend a great deal of time running through this detail with students and instilling in them the knowledge they need so that operating safely, whilst developing and enjoying their learning, becomes part of the culture at the school.

Of course, everything ultimately rests on continued reduction in rates of infection and on government advice, and this may change before 3 September. If it does, I will provide you with updated information.

Finally, in separate correspondence, we will inform you of arrangements for the first day back on Thursday 3 September.

Yours sincerely

Mr I R Gates  
Headteacher