



7 July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I write to you as we head towards the end of a challenging school year for us all and hope that we can all look forward to a summer holiday with improving weather and more freedoms.

I am delighted that schools have had a full term of being able to provide education on the school site for all of your children with comparatively little COVID disruption. I have had the immense joy of visiting many of our schools in the past few weeks and seeing your children both enjoying their education and also following COVID safe routines as if they were second nature to them. Handwashing, bubbles and distancing are currently a natural way of life in our schools and the children are settled and happy. I too followed our in-school visitor requirements and took lateral flow tests before my visits, wore a mask, used sanitiser and distanced when on site. I have been privileged to observe first-hand how smoothly all of the routines used by staff and pupils were operating. These routines have been highly successful in keeping your children and my staff safe and I am delighted to say that attendance in our schools has been well above national average during this time and that the infection rate has also been very low in our schools. We have been praised by our public health partners for the rigorous attention we have paid to infection control and to keeping your children safe and we couldn't have done this without your support, so a huge thanks to you all.

As you know the country is expected to move to Step 4 of the roadmap in a couple of weeks and we are therefore considering the requirements in our schools. The government has talked about lifting restrictions at this time because of the 'natural firebreak' of the school summer holidays. It is likely however that restrictions will be lifted just before the end of term and any changes we make then, in and around school, would disturb the current routines and could have a negative impact on your children. We therefore intend to complete this academic year with the current routines and infection control measures in place. We will then use the summer holiday to reconsider our arrangements for the school day and for the 'proportionate control measures' the government is asking us to put in place for September.

From the date Step 4 is introduced we understand that schools will no longer be required to send 'bubbles' home to self-isolate and that you will be contacted by Test and Trace and not by the school, if your child is identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19. The government is also stating that from the 16<sup>th</sup> August children will no longer be required to self-isolate even if they are contacted by Test and Trace, instead they would be advised to take a PCR test. You will be advised of this by Test and Trace at the time.

Although we understand that there is likely to be no legal requirement to wear a face covering in society from the introduction of Step 4, we will continue to wear them in our schools using current advice until the end of the term as a precautionary measure.

If your child is in year 6 and going to secondary school in September they will be tested prior to their return and you will be notified of the arrangements by the school they are going to attend. It is expected that staff and secondary school pupils will continue to undertake asymptomatic testing twice a week at home until at least the end of September when this will be reviewed by government.

The rigorous attention to handwashing, ventilation and cleaning has had a really positive effect not only on the transmission of COVID-19 but also on the transmission of other infections in school and thus we will continue with many of these regimes as we return in September. Some of the one-way systems and the routines for lunch and break times and for the beginning and end of the school day have also had a positive impact on behaviour and learning in schools. Over the summer holidays we will be reviewing the arrangements for the next academic year and each school will consider what it has learned from this experience and what strategies it will take forward into the new academic year. Your headteachers will inform you of any changes to be made in your school.

I am sure that you will join me in thanking the teachers and wider school staff for the exceptional job they have done to support your children during this unusual year. They really have been inspirational and I am sure will be recognised in the history books of the future as COVID heroes.

I do hope that the weather brightens up and that you all have a wonderful summer holiday and enjoy the opportunity to spend time with friends and family and to return to a more normal existence.

Look after yourselves and stay safe.

With very best wishes,



Mrs S M Samson

Chief Executive Officer

**University of Chichester Academy Trust**