

ADB/kb

10th September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

A New Year with a New Headteacher

A 'very warm' welcome to the new school year. As the new Headteacher I feel it is important to write to you all early in the new year, introduce myself and outline some key information.

I was previously employed as a Deputy Headteacher at Ousedale up to December 2015 when I left for my first Headship at the Kingswood Secondary Academy in Corby; part of the Greenwood Academies Trust (36 Academies within the Trust across the Midlands and East coast, educating over 17,000 pupils). I was subsequently appointed the Executive Principal of Kingswood and the City of Peterborough Academy before moving on to be a Curriculum Director across the Trust. The decision to come back to Ousedale was an easy one for me. After many years of excellent service to the school, I was excited to hear Sue Carbert was retiring because it meant I could apply for the position of Headteacher, a dream job for me! And so here I am, delighted and privileged to have my name above the door so to speak, and on the letterhead.

Our September start has been excellent. The staff are raring to go and it has been a delight to welcome all the children back onto site with a renewed sense of normality, or what we are referring to as 'the new normal'. Thank you for ensuring that, on the whole, the vast majority of our pupils have returned looking beautifully smart and with their pens, pencils, calculators, PE kit etc in order to start the year positively. Whilst we are not operating in bubbles anymore we do still maintain some essential Covid control measures to ensure we are all safe:

- Staff and pupils must sanitise their hands on entry and exit to classrooms
- Face masks may continue to be worn as preferred by individuals (staff and pupils)
- Tissues remain available in classes for the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' routine
- Desks will be sanitised more frequently especially in practical subjects e.g. computer keyboards
- Pupils continue to be reminded to wash their hands regularly
- Windows and doors currently remain open for ventilation, and when the weather turns colder will still be opened between lesson changeovers to circulate fresh air
- Pupils have taken 2 lateral flow tests (LFTs) on return to school and we ask that they continue to perform them twice weekly on a Sunday/Monday and Tuesday/Wednesday
- Staff also continue to take LFTs
- An enhanced cleaning regime continues, with more frequent cleaning of high contact areas throughout the day

As a school we are very mindful that the transition back into school will be a personal journey and experienced differently by our pupils: some will fit right back in as if nothing has happened over the last 18 months, some will be more anxious and find the change more difficult. We have lots of support available and continue to employ a school counsellor at both the Newport Pagnell and Olney sites. Staff have been trained and briefed about this on our recent training

days and will be looking out closely for those students who appear to be struggling in order to offer understanding and support. I am going to write to you in due course about a proposed minor amendment to the school day this year. We want to increase the length of daily tutor time to 20 minutes from the current 10 minutes. This will help us to support our pupils better as they transition back into school this year by offering more 'pastoral' time into the curriculum. It is likely to mean a slightly longer school day by adding 5 minutes on at the beginning and end of the day, but I will contact you separately regarding this.

Part of the transition and return to the 'new' normal has seen the re-launch of our Ousedale Standard for pupils and staff. These clearly set out what is expected of our pupils in terms of their approach to school: Respectful, Collaborative, Determined, Engaged and Organised; the staff standard sets clear expectations around the quality of teaching and learning that will ensure our pupils make excellent progress. I also want to reassure you, as I have the pupils, that any talk of 'catch-up' is a nonsense. Your sons and daughters are in the same position as every other child their age in the country: there is no-one for them to 'catch-up' to and none of us should worry unnecessarily about this. Our Ousedale Standards will ensure high quality teaching and learning for our pupils becomes the norm once again.

As Headteacher I do want to engage with our school community on a range of issues this year in addition to the school day. I will launch a broader review of our values and vision and want parental input into what you think are the important aspects for Ousedale to really push, nurture, develop and champion for its pupils. As an example, I do think we need to be thinking more about sustainability and the environment as a core value in all we do. Part of our increased engagement will be a greater presence on social media. Whilst I know this can be fraught with risk, there is a tremendous educational community sharing content all the time. We will, of course, take steps should any inappropriate content be posted from outside of the school. Therefore, please do subscribe to @Ousedale on Twitter and Facebook; you can also find Ousedale School on YouTube.

Whilst I spoke about wanting to amend and lengthen the school day slightly this year, I do now need to tell you about an extra day-off the pupils and staff will be having! You may know that the Queen is celebrating her Platinum Jubilee this year and as such an additional bank holiday has been scheduled for the 3rd June 2022. Unfortunately, this falls in our half-term holiday, as it does for many schools across the country, so where this happens schools have been instructed to hold an alternative day off. Ours will be Friday, 17th December 2021 i.e. school ends for the Christmas holiday at the end of the day Thursday, 16th December. I announced it to the pupils as an early Christmas present from the new Headteacher: it seemed to be well received! The revised school term dates are on the school website including our training day dates.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I shall endeavour to be available for 'drop-in' chats at all of our parent evenings this year; as such I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming months and years and engaging with you as we take Ousedale on to even greater achievements.

Yours faithfully



Mr A Burton
Headteacher