

14th May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

I hope you are safe and well and coping with the extended lock down as well as you can. I remain amazed by the resilience of our families and students, and the examples of work and stories you share are often the highlight of our day.

I am sure you will have listened intently to the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday and wondered exactly what implications it might have for your children. I restrained myself from writing immediately because with most of these broad announcements, further details have then been released in the next day or so that sometimes change the impact. That is very much what has happened and continues to happen. The information we are receiving is changing almost by the hour, but I did not want to leave it any longer before talking with you all.

Usually, I try and keep my updates quite short, but I am afraid this one will be a bit of an epic. Please bear with me and try and read it all. There is a reason I want to share so much of our thinking as we move closer to a possible return for students.

Firstly, there is a huge amount of speculation in the media and on social media; please don't read too much of it. Much of it conflicts and causes confusion. In the end, each school will need to apply the guidance in a different way as each school has a different setting, different logistical issues and different needs for its families. I will talk with you openly and honestly about our plans, the challenges we face and what we will need from you and your children to make any changes work well in advance of any students stepping through the door. Our priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students, families and staff and we won't be rushed in to making any decisions about how or what we do until we are absolutely sure we can do it safely.

Below is the link to the government advice for parents about the possible re-opening of schools.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

It is important to recognise a few things before I go any further:

- Currently, schools have been asked to plan for the possible return of some students in some capacity after the 1st June. The government has set a review date of the 28th May when it will decide if this will go ahead.
- Secondary schools have been asked to provide some face to face contact for some students to support their remote learning.
- The government dictates which year groups we are open to and we have no discretion in this.
- We will remain open to the most vulnerable students and children of designated key workers across all year groups.

Clearly, this has very different implications for different year groups so I will try to outline our thinking and plans for each year group as I go along. I fully recognise that all children, no matter when they return, will have missed a significant amount of school and our priority will be to make sure they feel comfortable and confident to return. We will spend much of their initial time in school ensuring they understand what we need from them and more importantly, what they need from us. We know each child will have had a very different experience of lock down and we will want to understand exactly where they are in terms of their learning before we can begin to catch them up on whatever they may need to know.

Current Y6. I am delighted to have over 200 families choosing to send their children to us in September and I am including you in our updates to reassure you about the actions we are taking.

We are already talking with your primary schools to collect all the information we would normally have about your child before they join us. I know they have not been able to sit their SAT exams as they expected, and I am in detailed discussions with Derbyshire County Council about plans to share other assessment information to help us understand as much as we can about them. At the moment it is unlikely we will be able to host our usual transition days, when your child would visit the school and meet their classmates. This was always followed by a parents' event to talk with you about any concerns and answer any questions. In place of this, we intend to host a virtual event for you and your children, and we are currently working through the technical issues of this. We are planning for your child to feel confident and excited about joining secondary school and are confident we can do this.

Current Y7, Y8 and Y9 - there are currently no plans for these year groups to return to school before September. That is one of the hardest sentences I have ever written. It means we won't have seen these students for almost 6 months by the time they return. We are making some changes to the way we are working to make sure the work we set is as positive, engaging and as beneficial as we can. We are initiating a wider and more frequent range of pastoral contacts by email, text and phone, especially where it has been a while since we have been in touch in person. We have also found a way to make sure we can still celebrate our students' success and achievements through changes to the rewards system alongside other end of year celebrations.

Teachers are re-focusing the work they set on a smaller pool of key knowledge and skills that they really believe will benefit your child for a September return. They are also starting to produce lessons with audio and video commentary to support understanding and engagement. Keep an eye out for these special presentations. We won't forget you and we don't want you to forget us!

When these students do return, we will be especially mindful that we need to fully understand what they need and how we can work best with them.

Note for Y9 - you have now chosen your options and Mrs Jones has done an amazing job of matching your preferences with courses for next year. We have written to you all with the course allocations (although, Covid 19 affected postal services which meant you received them over the space of 7-10 days). If you wish to do so, you may now focus on your core subjects and your options choices and stop work on subjects you will not be studying in Y10. However, we know that many of you enjoy working on subjects you may not have chosen. We will keep sending you work for those subjects and you are very welcome to keep working on them for as long as you wish.

Current Y10 & Y12. We have been tasked by government to *prepare to begin some face to face contact with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning.* We are working through exactly what that really means, how we can do so safely and what is the most effective way we can use the time we will have with your children. The constrictions needed to keep students and staff safe on site and the associated government guidelines means it is very unlikely to take the form of full-time education and conventional lessons. This means we can explore some innovative approaches to what we do with the time we have to make sure your children feel as confident as possible for their exams in summer 2021.

It would be really helpful to understand what you think about the decision to re-open for Y10 & Y12. I am asking each of our Y10 & Y 12 families to complete the survey via the link below to indicate if you intend for your child to return if they are safe and well when the school re-opens to these year groups. We will use this information solely to help with our planning, it will be kept securely and deleted once the current crisis is over. Please read the government advice in the link above before you respond as it contains important information about national changes to expectations about attendance and other areas.

Essentially, although I know you will have many concerns about travel, the school site, student conduct and lots of other areas, but working on the assumption that these issues can be resolved safely, we need to understand how many of our families would intend their child to return. Please do respond - it will really help with our planning.

Survey Link

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=nCnxVVhfOkuiO1Bau4fh7mqOxh6lPThKmXMKYxe57oVUMkNVVE4zUjJIWUY3NU9MTk4zVks1MldDRS4u>

The survey will close on Monday 18th May 9.00am

Current Y11 - you have not been forgotten and many of you will be returning to study in Sixth Form. We know that some of you will have planned to join other post 16 provision but if you have changed your mind and would like to stay at BCS, please contact Ms Cruse or Mrs Jones for a discussion.

Ms Cruse has written the letter below especially for Y11. It contains some very important information for all students. Also, if you are someone who thought Sixth Form may be slightly out of reach, there is an exciting opportunity to join our new one-year pathway and we are launching our new Post 16 Performing Arts Course for those with a passion for drama and music. There is more information attached to the end of this letter. If you have been thinking about an apprenticeship or college, you can still contact Mrs Barnwell for advice.

Dear Parent/Carer and Y11 student

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. I wanted to write to you to let you know that during these troubling times, you have not been forgotten! This is an unprecedented situation and I am so sorry that your child will not have the opportunity to prove themselves in their GCSE exams. Rest assured, staff are working hard to ensure all students receive grades that reflect what they would have achieved had they sat their exams in the Summer.

It still stands that if your child achieves the entry requirements of 5 higher grade passes (from 9 – 4), they have a place at our Sixth Form. We are very pleased that we can offer all A level or L3 courses on our option grid (except further maths and music but please remember that the L3 Performing Arts course can incorporate music modules for those who want to keep studying some music) however, please bear in mind that some subjects require students to meet specific criteria to access certain courses.

Something else we are very pleased to be offering is a new, one year pathway which will enable those students who might not achieve our full entry requirements to still join our Sixth Form for a year to gain a range of useful qualifications that might take them on to apprenticeship, employment or even stay with us to pursue A levels. The pathway will offer students the chance to study L2 Health & Social Care, L3 Applied Biology, a L2 Extended Project and the opportunity to re-sit English/Maths GCSE if needed. We would also like to be able to offer a work experience placement on this pathway but of course, that would be subject

to the current situation re: Covid 19. We will be able to give more specific details of the pathway in the next month and will write to you again in due course.

We look forward to meeting both you and your child (in person or virtually) on GCSE results day on the 20th August where we will confirm their place with us and give them a welcome pack of useful information about life in the Sixth Form. We also intend to set aside a couple of days in early September to meet again with new students to discuss the suitability of option combinations and to answer any questions they may have.

In the meantime, I have asked staff to put together some work for Y11 students to do over Summer to help make the transition from Y11 into 12 an easier one. There will be a range of optional tasks for them to engage with to help get a feel of what Sixth Form study will be like. Please check our website in a couple of weeks to access the materials.

If your child has changed their mind about their A level choices, please ask them to contact me so we can update our system. We are still receiving applications and will be happy to do so up to the start of the next academic year in September.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address below.

Once again, I hope you and your family stay safe and well and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Kind regards

Jackie Cruse - Head of Sixth Form

jackie.cruse@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk

Current Y13 - we will be keeping in touch with you throughout the summer as the results process unfolds and to support you in reaching your preferred destination. We will still be able to offer our outstanding advice and guidance for students leaving sixth form, even if it is delivered through different channels.

There is so much more to talk with you about and I will keep you fully informed of any developments as and when they unfold. We have all learned how quickly things can change, so thank you in advance for your patience and understanding. I understand that, if you are to feel confident sending your child back into our care, you will want more detailed explanations of the school's plans for how it intends to reopen; you can be confident that I will share this with you.

Please take care and be safe,

Craig Yates - Headteacher



ENGAGING NEW AUDIENCES

The course gives you the opportunity to reimagine pieces that have been performed before and make your own mark combining acting, music, dance, musical theatre, puppetry and mime.

The whole course is taught in a vocational context with a professional perspective and by teachers that have worked and do work in the industry.



BUXTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL SIXTH FORM

PERFORMING ARTS

ADDRESS

Buxton Community School
College Road
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 9EA

CONTACT US

01298 23122
shairon.rodgers@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk
samantha.jones@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk
www.buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk

Extended Certificate
Level 3 OCR Cambridge Technical
KS5 Study Programme alongside A levels

"Drama at the Community School is where I met and first collaborated with the two people I would go on to form a theatre company with. We are still working together 20 years later." Michael Grady-Hall





COURSE CONTENT

4 mandatory units:

- 1 Prepare to work in the PA sector
- 2 Proposal for a commissioning brief
- 3 Influential Performance Practice
- 4 Combined Arts

Optional Units:

- Current Issues in P.A.
Improvisation
Health & Fitness for Performance
Performing Repertoire
(Externally & Internally Assessed)



FIT FOR PURPOSE

A refreshing practical course that is endorsed by universities, employers, industry professionals and vocational colleges alike.

You will learn skills for sustaining a career in the Performing Arts sector, what employers expect, and the practical application of skills and knowledge.

Students will create and sustain a commissioned project from start to finish, research and be influenced by a full repertoire of genres, styles, social, cultural and historical aspects of performance and find innovative and dynamic ways to combine different art forms and styles.



ALUMNI

Our sixth formers have gone on to study at:

RADA, Italia Conti, University of York, Leeds College of Music, EAST 15, ALRA, Mountview Academy, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire of Music, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of Exeter, MMU, University of Warwick, LJMU and many more



“It showed us all how to unlock our creative potential”

- Liam Morson, Musician –

"Hugely enhanced my communication and social skills" – Emily Poulter

"It also helped me develop a stage presence for my musical performances which helped massively in my degree." – Nancy Brookes - musician

"Without this course and tutoring I would not be doing the things I'm doing today and it set the foundations for the development of skills and passion for this field of work." - Eleanor Hibbert – theatre maker

"The BTEC Performing Arts school, whilst being one of the more enjoyable and social classes I took was also integral to my academic career." – Jack Ashcroft – Film Production



TESTIMONIES

"I have fantastic memories of performing in the Buxton Fringe with close friends during the BTEC course, whilst also developing skills which would later help me pursue a career in theatre." - Rob Hamilton, actor

"I was accepted into Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts in London with a full scholarship and have 7 years' experience in this wonderful industry." – Matt Warhurst, actor

"Drama at BCS truly enhanced my experience at 6th Form, and helped me to develop invaluable life skills which I wouldn't have developed in the classroom alone – including confidence, creativity, time/project management, problem solving, teamwork leadership and probably many more." – Sophia Leggett

"The course teachers helped me to see my potential and with their help I secured a place to study Drama at the University of Exeter." – Toni Saxton

"The course gave me the confidence to take on the murky corporate world of London" – Laura Foulkes

"My love for T.I.E gave me the experience and confidence I needed to get into my P.G.C.E course." – Emma Jones, Teacher

"The classes were inspiring and somewhere you could express yourself freely." – Sinead Hayman

