Our ref: SCR/EJO

July 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I write to you at the end of a very challenging year for everyone. We have rolled our timetable and students have settled well in their new years and classes. When students start back to college in September, they will be on week 5 of their new year. This means they will know exactly what classes they are in and which teachers they have each day so will be able to start learning as soon as the autumn term starts.

Unity College will close at 12.05pm on Tuesday 20 July 2021 for the summer holiday. Please check the holiday pattern for 2021 – 2022 on the website as there is an additional holiday date for students and staff on **Friday 29 April 2021.**

The government expect schools and colleges to test secondary school students for Covid-19 before they return to school in September. In order for this to happen we will need a staggered start for students.

**Start of term – September 2021**

The current Government guidance is that we should be testing students, who have consent to be tested, before they start back in September 2021. The following has been arranged:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Testing Date** | **Testing Time** | **Start of College Date** |
| 7 | Tuesday 31 August | 8.00am – 12.30pm | Wednesday 1 September 8.40am |
| 11 | Tuesday 31 August | 1.00pm – 3.00pm | Wednesday 1 September 1.30pm |
| 8 | Wednesday 1 September | 9.30am – 2.30pm | Thursday 2 September 8.40am |
| 9 | Wednesday 1 September | 9.30am – 2.30pm | Thursday 2 September 8.40am |
| 10 | Wednesday 1 September | 9.30am – 2.30pm | Thursday 2 September 8.40am |

If you have consented for your child to be tested in college, they should arrive between the times above. If you have not consented but would now like your child to be tested, consent forms are available on our college website. Your child will not have to wear uniform to come for the test but they MUST have a face covering (unless exempt). They should arrive via the college decking area. Once they have had the test, they will be able to leave. Parents/carers are responsible for getting their child to college and back home safely. We will contact you ONLY if your child’s test comes back positive and this will be done within one hour of your child taking the test in college. A second test will be carried out 3-5 days later during the college day. Further information about these tests can be found on our website.

**In summary:**

**• Years 8, 9 and 10 will start at 8.40am on Thursday 2 September 2021.**

**• Year 11 will start at 1.30pm on Wednesday 1 September 2021.**

**• Year 7 will start at 8.40am on Wednesday 1 September 2021**

We will have over 1,300 students at Unity College from September 2021. The most rapid and effective way to communicate with parents/carers is via our college website www.unity-college.com. It is essential that parents/carers and students check the website regularly for any updates/news.

Three hundred year 7 students will be starting in September and most will never have been in the building so it is vital that they have time to be inducted into Unity College on Wednesday 1st September.

Unity College is expanding and we have additional classrooms being built to accommodate the demand for places at the college. The new building houses nineteen classrooms, including: six science laboratories, a new food technology room, a new library and PE changing facilities for boys and girls. Due to the pandemic, the date for completion has been put back from September 2021 until Spring 2022 so space will be at a premium between now and the opening of the new building. To help with this shortage of space, we have now fully amalgamated the City Learning Centre giving us three additional classrooms and a new dining area. Also, four temporary classrooms are arriving on site in July 2021.

There will be a great deal of planning over the summer holidays so that when we open in September your child will be offered a full, enriched curriculum and opportunities to catch up where they have missed out on key learning. I hope that we will be able to return to normal in September; however, all of this planning will depend on the current situation of Covid-19 in the local area and any further advice that the government sends to schools in the coming weeks.

Current guidance states that from September 2021 students and staff will not need to wear a face covering; however, students and staff can wear a face covering if they would prefer. We will still have stringent safety procedures in place to minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Students MUST follow all our Covid-19 rules and use hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes which will be available in college for students; however, if your child wishes to bring in their own hand sanitiser and wipes, this is also acceptable. Further updates about Covid-19 restrictions will be placed onto the website in late August 2021. Students MUST bring with them their own basic equipment e.g. pens, pencils, ruler and eraser. Students will need to bring in their own water bottles as water fountains will be re-instated. Please ensure that your child’s water bottle is filled from home at the start of the day to minimise queues at the water fountains. Students can only fill up bottles during their social time and MUST not be late for lessons due to filling their bottles.

Unity College is a smoke free site. We have a clear policy that is available to read on our website. If your child is caught smoking on the college site, I will not hesitate to inform law enforcement officers and encourage them to issue an immediate £50 fine to the child. We will also follow the sanctions set out in the policy with any child caught smoking on the college premises. Electronic cigarettes are also not allowed and are treated the same as cigarettes. Lighters and matches are NOT allowed in college and if students are caught in possession of these items there will be a serious sanction. We have regular searches of students to ensure that they do not have cigarettes on them in college. Any cigarettes found are confiscated and destroyed.

If your child needs to take any medication whilst in college, they must bring in a letter from a parent/carer with full authorisation and instructions. Your child must take it to the first aid room. The medication must be clearly labelled. Any medication will be stored securely in the first aid room. If there is a medical emergency, it will be the decision of the first aider and a member of the senior leadership team as to whether an ambulance is needed.

As so many parents drop off and pick up their child from college, we have a system in place that all parents need to adhere to. I ask that, in the mornings, if you are dropping your child off in a car that you do this on the turning circle only. Please ensure that you park in the drop off area. Please leave promptly after dropping off your child. Do not park on the college car park, including the disabled parking bays. Please drive slowly and give students the right of way on the crossing at the entrance of the college. Alternatively, park in the pay and display car park and your child can make their way to college from there.

At the end of college parents ARE NOT able to enter the college site to collect their child. Access for parents in cars will be prohibited from 2.30pm until 3.20pm. Please park on the car park opposite the college if you are collecting your child from college. I am aware it is a pay and display car park, but as long as you do not leave your vehicle, you will not have to pay. DO NOT park along Towneley Holmes Road as you may be issued with a fixed penalty notice by the Park Rangers. The only cars able to access the college between 2.30pm and 3.20pm are to collect a child who has a disability. If this is the case, please contact college so that a car parking pass can be allocated to you. Please also refrain from parking at the back of college as this causes congestion for residents.

If you are coming into college during the day for a meeting, you can park on site including on the turning circle. Please ensure that you have made an appointment if you need to come into college and I ask that it is only one adult per meeting due to the ongoing pandemic. If you are coming in for a meeting, can you ensure that you wear a face covering on entering the building.

I have been extremely impressed by how smart most students look in their uniform. It is essential that all students are always in full uniform creating a “dressed for business” atmosphere throughout the college. Hair styles and colour must also conform to a “dressed for business” ethos with no unnatural hair colours or extreme hair styles. Please ensure that your child is in the correct full uniform every day. A reminder that jewellery at Unity College is not permitted except for a watch. We do not allow any piercings due to health and safety reasons, this includes ear piercings, face piercings and tongue piercings. If your child is going to have a piercing, can you ensure that he/she has this done at the beginning of the summer holiday, so it can be removed for the new term in September. Spray cosmetics including deodorants, hairsprays etc are not permitted at Unity College due to the sensitivity of the fire alarms.

I have noticed that a few students are wearing too much makeup for college. Please could you remind your child that, if they wear makeup, this should be minimal and subtle, otherwise they will be asked to remove it when they arrive at college in the morning.

Some skirt lengths are also causing me concern as they are not of a modest length. If your child is going to wear a skirt for college, please ensure that it is a modest length and appropriate for college. Also, we will only accept tailored trousers; black leggings and skinny black jeans are not acceptable as part of the college uniform.

We continue with our huge focus on literacy and oracy with an ambition that all students read well and develop a love of reading**. All students must have a reading book in their bag every day and as parents I request that you continue to encourage your child to read widely and often at home.**

I urge you as parents to check if your child is entitled to Free School Meals and have not yet claimed them. By parents claiming this entitlement, extra funds come into college for students. If you have any questions about your entitlement, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Ingham at college. Her email address is k.ingham@unity.lancs.sch.uk. Free school meals vouchers will be allocated for the summer break. If you have not received your voucher by Friday 23 July email fsm@unity.lancs.sch.uk

I also want to ensure that Unity College is a safe environment for students and staff. Following the guidance from the Department for Education and Skills on “Screening and searching of pupils for weapons” there are spot checks by myself and Mrs Hodgson, Deputy Headteacher, using hand held metal detectors. This measure is a precaution and it is not meant to alarm parents or students; it is intended to ensure that we do not have knives in college and that we continue to have a safe learning environment at Unity College. We have had this system in place for the last ten years ensuring that all members of our college community are safe. If a child is caught in possession of any knife at Unity College, I will not hesitate to permanently exclude them from Unity College. There is always on-going publicity in the national newspapers about drugs and weapons being used by students in and outside of school. If a student is caught selling drugs or the intent to sell drugs to anyone at Unity College, that student will be permanently excluded immediately.

Please inform us if you have a change of address, telephone number or other contact details. It is vital that we keep your child’s records up to date.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of Unity College as we work together to offer the very best learning opportunities and experiences for your child.

Yours faithfully



S Cryer (Mrs)

Headteacher