



8 September 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

The first week of the 23-24 academic year at Backwell has been characterised by the warmth of the welcome back expressed by staff and pupils alike and the heat of the sun and Saharan winds! Thankfully, there is a confident forecast of cooler weather next week and so we revert to normal uniform from Monday.

Buildings

The issue of the state of UK school buildings remains, rightly, in the news at the moment. Please can I remind you of the letter I sent earlier this week which will reassure you in relation to the specific issue of RAAC: [Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete](#)

More widely, all schools would benefit from additional funding to support the upkeep and improvement of buildings, but I am pleased to report that we were able to carry out several significant works on the Backwell school site this summer. The 'relief road' into school from Meadow Close has been widened and re-surfaced with further re-surfacing taking place in the Quad area, improving the safety and appearance of one of the key outdoor spaces enjoyed by pupils. The Trust's push for environmentally efficient polices has led to the installation of LED lighting in all classrooms in the school. There have been a number of other projects, including the renovation of flat roofs, new flooring in the Theatre foyer and improved fire safety.

We have also completed our programme of work on the school's toilets. Toilets in the lower school science corridor (used by students in years 7,8 and 9) and those in Cotswold (used by students in years 10 and 11) have been completely redesigned and provided with new fixtures and fittings. This means that, at break and lunchtime, all Backwell students have access to a large number of single cubicle toilets. This shift away from communal toilet blocks has already meant a significant reduction in vandalism and is creating a safe environment for all pupils to access clean, private facilities.

E-cigarettes and 'vapes'

Despite the benefits to tobacco smokers hoping to give up tobacco, vaping has become a serious health threat to young people. We will continue to be vigilant at school in order to educate students on the dangers of vapes, especially single use and un-regulated devices. A particular concern for school currently is vapes marketed at school children. One particular brand masquerades as a highlighter pen with the brand name 'High Light' and sold in fluorescent colours. Please be equally vigilant in explaining the addictive nature of nicotine and the potentially harmful additional chemicals in some vapes and look out for these devices. Thank you.

Transport

GWR have made us aware of planned works between **17th and 22nd September** (inclusive), which will affect rail travel. It is the responsibility of North Somerset Council to provide alternative safe transport for Backwell students whose home-to-school travel is currently via train. When they have set out a full plan for how this will be put into place for pupils on these dates, it will be shared with you.

Upcoming Events

It has been exciting to greet our new students in years 7 and 12 and to catch up with other pupils after the summer. We are equally keen to see parents and carers to discuss our plans to support pupils learning over the next year. With that in mind, please note the following events:

- Tuesday Sep 12 6pm in the main theatre: **year 10 parents' information evening**
- Wednesday Sep 13 6pm in the 6th form theatre: **year 12 parents' information evening**
- Thursday Sep 14 6pm in the main theatre: **year 11 parents' information evening**
- Wednesday Sep 20 6pm in the 6th form theatre: **year 13 parents' information evening**
- Thursday Sep 21 from 5pm: **Open Evening** for parents and carers of Year 6 pupils

We look forward to seeing you at one of these events.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones can be brought to school but must be turned off and placed in bags (not pockets!) from arrival on the school site until 3.10 pm. Students who do not follow these rules will have their phone confiscated and they will serve a sanction in the Behaviour Support Room (BSR). Should your child have their phone confiscated more than twice their phone will not be returned to them and it will have to be collected from the school site by a parent/carers. Sixth Form students can use their phone in the Sixth Form Common Room and the Library, but they should not be using their phones walking around the school site.

Travelling to School

A polite reminder to all parents/carers that cars are not allowed on school site to drop off or collect students at the start or end of the school day. The Backwell Leisure Centre car park should also not be used for picking up/dropping off children for school. Please also be respectful to our neighbours who live in neighbouring roads if you are meeting your children in the village. More information on travelling to and from school can be [found on our website](#)

There are some more key notice and reminders for you below.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Nunes
Headteacher

MESSAGES

Parents' Handbook 2023-24

A reminder that there is a wealth of general information to be found about the day-to-day running of the school on both the [school website](#) and in the [Parents' Handbook 2023-24](#). The handbook covers a wide variety of topics from how to set up access to and use the Parents' Portal, how to report an absence or sickness, the behaviour and rewards system in use at the school, to lost property and timings of the school day. This is always a handy reference guide and, along with the website, may answer many of the queries that parents might have. The handbook is reviewed annually so even if your child has been with us for a few years there will be changes and updates which are relevant to your child. For future

reference the Parents' Handbook can be found on the school website in the '[Useful Publications](#)' tab.

School Lockers

Further to the information sent out at the end of Term 6, we can confirm that new lockers for students have been installed over the summer break. Old lockers will be being removed at the end of September. Further information (including instructions on returning keys), will be given to students during tutor times over the next couple of weeks.

Please see the information linked here: [Rent My Locker](#) to find out how to rent a new locker.

New Catering Software

We have launched new software for our catering systems which went live at the start of September. Unfortunately, there have been a few teething problems which we are working through – the majority of which are now solved. One ongoing issue however is the synchronisation between ParentPay (i.e. the information parents see relating to transactions) and the live till system (what our caterers and students see). The information at the till is now correct and we are working hard to resolve the issue in ParentPay. Thank you for your patience in the meantime.

Accessing the Parents' Portal

Our Parents' Portal is a secure area of the school website which gives parents of pupils at the school access to information about their child. Amongst other things, parents can view their child's attendance record and timetable, contact their child's teachers directly, view information relating to behaviour (rewards and sanctions) and access curriculum materials intended to support learning at home. The portal can be accessed from the school website via [Backwell School - Frog Parents' Portal](#).

All parents of students in Years 7 and 12 who have just started with us here at Backwell School should now find that they can now access the Parents' Portal. On your first visit to the portal you will be asked to create a username and password using the email address you have registered with the school. In order to do this, you will need to click "forgot password?" and follow the instructions from there. A handy step-by-step guide can be [found here](#).

If any existing parents are experiencing difficulties logging on, please ensure that you are using the following link <https://frog.backwellschool.net> to access your account.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday 12 September	Year 10 Parents' Information Evening , 6.00 pm in main theatre
Wednesday 13 September	Year 12 Parents' Information Evening. 6.00 pm in Sixth Form Theatre
Thursday 14 September	Year 11 Parents' Information Evening , 6.00 pm in main theatre

Wednesday 13 September	West Side Story Auditions – Jet and Shark male roles, 3.20 – 5.30 pm in Sixth Form Theatre
Thursday 14 September	West Side Story Auditions – Jet and Shark female roles, 3.20 – 5.30 pm in Sixth Form Theatre
16 – 19 September	Duke of Edinburgh Gold assessed expedition – Brecon Beacons
Wednesday 20 September	Photography Day – Students in Years 7, 10, 12 and new students
Wednesday 20 September	Year 13 Parents' Information Evening, 6.00 pm in Sixth Form Theatre
Thursday 21 September	Open Evening, from 5.00 pm School will finish at 2.20pm (end of period 5).
Friday 22 September	Inset Day – School closed to students
30 Sept – 2 October	Duke of Edinburgh Silver assessed expedition – Black Mountains

For further trips and events, please see the [‘Calendar’ page](#) on the school website.

Clubs

- Sports Clubs will start next week (w/c 11 September).
- Music and Performing Arts will start w/c 18 September.
- All other clubs (chess, photography, coding etc) will start after half term and these will be advertised in a booklet that will be circulated in October.

Please click on the website link: [Clubs and Courses](#) for details which will be updated with the relevant information by c.o.p. today.

Quick link to [Parents' Handbook 2023-24](#).

Quick link to Careers Bulletin - 08 September 2023:

[Current Careers Events and Opportunities - 08 September 2023](#)

LETTERS HOME

[Sixth Form Bulletin for week commencing 11 September](#) - Parents/Carers of Sixth Form students

[Year 12 Parents' and Carers' Information Evening : Wednesday 13 September](#) – Parents/Carers of Sixth Form students

[Year 13 Home Study Agreement](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 13 students

[Year 10 Parents' Information Evening: Tuesday 12 September](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 10 students

[Year 11 Parents' Information Evening Thursday 14 September](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 11 students

[Year 11 GCSE Geography Fieldtrip to Bristol's Temple Quarter](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 11 students

[Nasal Flu Vaccine Programme](#) - Parents/Carers of students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11

[Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete](#) – Parents /Carers of all students.

[Rent My Locker](#) – Information for all Parents/Carers