

15<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As I said to the Year 11 and 13 students sent home at the start of the first lockdown: COVID is one of the era defining events that bookmark history. It has been a natural disaster that has been met by the ingenuity and reliance of people everywhere and will be a defining point in many people's lives. It is not only the very sad number of deaths and the personal impact that these have had which will scar this decade, but the changes that have been brought about. It is the way that we have come to appreciate parts of society in different ways: the NHS of course; but also for example, the delivery drivers and the shop workers who have worked throughout the pandemic. Parents have embraced the joys of home schooling and teachers have had to learn to be skilled at teaching via TEAMS. We have got used to social distancing and the pleasures of zoom meetings. Our reliance on technology has been transformed and it seems likely that some things might stay the same, if they were better than before: on line parents' evenings for example.

I think as a society, we are often accepting of adversity and expecting that we will be able to come through it by sheer hard work and resilience. I think this is true, especially if we add flexibility and imagination to the national character. As I write this there is an air of optimism in the air, the Prime minister has nailed his colours to the mast for the 19<sup>th</sup> of July and the English football team has united the country in a euphoria of success, although to me, series win by our "reserve" cricket team against Pakistan in the One Day Internationals this week is more heroic. It feels as if we are "At the end of a storm, There's a golden sky, And the sweet silver song of a lark". Let us hope that the optimism is well founded.

I would like this opportunity to reflect on the past year through a somewhat clumsy analogy. To me this year feels like it would to ride in the Grand National, a series of insurmountable fences. The advantage of course is that you tackle each fence one at a time and consequently you don't see the whole year laid out, which is a good thing.

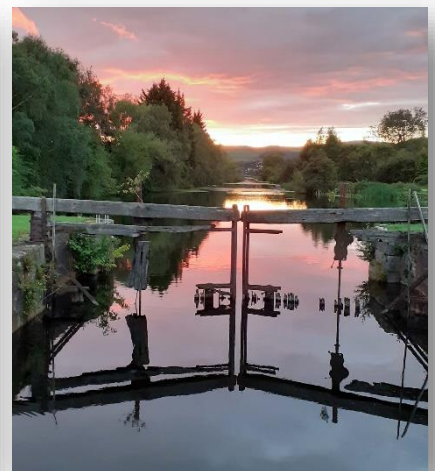
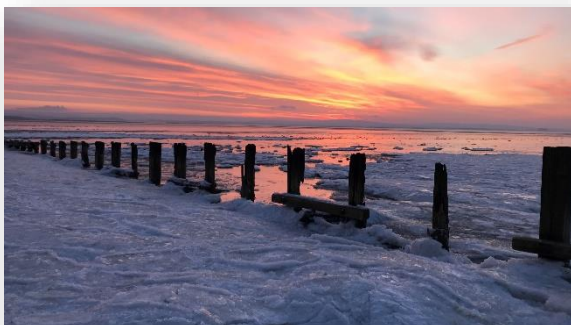
We started the year with extremely tight COVID restrictions, with the intention of getting the children back into school to bring some normality back to their learning following the first lockdown. We had very loose directives from the government and two opposing imperatives: to keep the children and staff safe, whilst delivering the best possible education. We felt that there was a need to allow as much specialist teaching as possible, including teaching in specialist rooms. In order to allow this to happen hygiene, bubbles, double lessons, one way systems and the dreaded outside toilets were necessary. This was a phenomenal achievement by our staff, made possible by the maturity and compliance of our children.

So, we're over the first fence, into the long Autumn Term, dominated by track and trace and the looming possibility of sending students home to self-isolate. We only sent home four year groups all term, we wanted to react quickly, sending whole year group's home, not only to stop it spreading, but to maintain teaching on line. We were not perfect, our processes and communication improved throughout the term but we got through. The children were taught, safety was maintained, but, let me underline that, but the school was not the UVHS I love. It was utilitarian, the warmth and culture that make it special were missing. No concerts, no sport, little association space and few extracurricular activities. There were no trips, no visitors and no evening events. Do not misunderstand me, I understand why this had to be so, but as teachers we relish in the joy of the job and it has been missed.

As the realisation dawned that this was going to continue (and even become more restrictive with the introduction of masks) our teachers became more imaginative to bring back some of the warmth to their lessons and to the school in general.



On Red Nose Day Year 7 had a joke competition and designed some superheroes! Including this classic: 'Last night my classroom was broken in to and all the dictionaries were stolen. I'm lost for words!'



As you can see from these pictures, one of the most exciting things to come from the KS3 Learning through Enrichment Program has been the Squirrel Shop Photography Competition.

Our next fence, for which we had a good twenty four hours' notice, but for which we had prepared was the "Becher's Brook" that was teaching the bulk of our students online whilst they were locked down at home whilst remaining open for vulnerable children. Consequently there was always a large staff present on site throughout the lockdown, working with children, whilst most teachers learned the art of TEAMS teaching. Almost by definition teachers thrive on the interaction in the classroom, so this period was a different sort of challenge. We had to adapt lesson lengths and homework expectations, but the overwhelming number of children engaged very positively under often challenging circumstances, and I suspect quite a few parents had their first experience of being in a "classroom" for a couple of decades or so. At the same time we were developing the LFT testing capacity in school.

Again however we needed to increase the warmth and the engagement of the children. We developed a series of enrichment challenges instead of formal homework during the Spring Term. There were dozens of different suggested activities, designed to meet the varied interests of all our children, or to encourage them to try something new.



*Enrichment Activities: Staff suggested over 70 ideas to inspire you to get outside, be creative, make memories and learn something new.*

So now to our next fence, the return to school, but we need to test everyone three times as they return to school. Our Sports Hall became a testing centre and we carried out 4,000 tests in ten days as the teachers welcomed back our children into their classrooms with genuine joy. An anonymous member of the local community nominated the school for an award following all of this hard work by our Health and Safety team, members of staff and volunteers from the community. The number of volunteers who offered their time and their professionalism and hard work were quite humbling. So the fact they were nationally recognised by this recent award was gratifying:

The Summer Term was to be dominated by Teacher Assessed Grades for Year 11 and 13. In many ways this was the "Chair" the most difficult fence at Aintree. We had to develop a system to assign grades to all of our students based on our ongoing knowledge and assessment of our students, but also with the rigour and integrity usually applied to external examinations. Not only were producing evidence to justify students achieving the best possible grades to ensure that they progressed to the

next stage of their lives, but also to ensure that they were standardised, moderated and case hardened to prevent outside challenge. Two things struck me inordinately, the sheer dedication and work that all the teaching staff put into this process, but also maturity and dedication of our Year 11s and 13s. As I said to Year 11 in their final assembly: these grades have been earned and have the same validity as those that were assigned in the past through formal exams, in fact they probably better reflect the students' effort and ability more accurately.



*Year 7 Cooking Club. Cooking Club will be back next year, and fingers crossed will return to normal, welcoming students from each year group. In the meantime though, happy virtual cooking!*



*Year 7 Cricket has been running in recent weeks with Mr Hall. Making the most of the good weather, the Year 7 students have been through their paces outside as they develop their skills and match awareness.*

It is here I must apologise. I made an erroneous assumption when we released Year 11 and 13 at the end of their exams, that the world would open up as planned and that Leaver's days and assemblies would happen as normal. This saddens me as both year groups did their part and gave their all in the assessments and didn't get their reward or the right ending to their school days. We are however looking at a Prom for Year 11 at the start of next year.



*All of the seven UVHS Y13 students who have applied to study Medicine at university next year have received offers.*

With the arrival good weather, the school is beginning to feel a bit more like normal and there is some optimism in the air as we race towards the line. Assuming no Devon Loch like incidents we should make it to the winners' enclosure where we can finally stand still. We have had the world's longest sports day (four days) this week and are looking forward to the school being more normal next year.

As with all years, at the end of the year we have to say goodbye to some valued members of staff:

Mrs H Wilson is leaving our Science department after a year with us as is Mrs S Wilson from maths and Mrs J Raven from Design and Technology. Miss S Whitehouse is departing after four years in Humanities as is Mr Guerrero who is leaving English after six years with us.

We are also losing Mr H Taylor from maths. Mr Taylor has been at the school since 2008 and has been a popular and steadfast member of the teaching staff as UVHS has developed into the school it is today. The school has felt his presence in many areas, not least as the brains behind the sponsored walk. We will miss him, but wish him all the best for his retirement.

Mrs A Cooper, our Assistant Headteacher, who has been with us since 2007 is leaving us for (Alpine) pastures new. She has been a vital member of the Senior Leadership Team, being at the heart of school improvement, particularly with her leading of intervention work to ensure *all* children fulfilled their potential in their exams. During her tenure in this role, no child has left UVHS without GCSEs. During the past Year it has been Mrs Cooper who has ensured that Year 11 and 13 leavers have done

so with the necessary qualifications to move on to the next stage of their lives. It is, to a great degree, her diligence that ensures that these grades are as valid for our students as if the normal exam process had taken place. She is a dedicated professional who we will miss greatly.

However, with some staff leaving, it means that we have the opportunity to welcome some new recruits.

## New Staff 2021

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### **Miss Barraclough : Teacher of Social Sciences**

Hello! My name is Miss Barraclough and I am delighted to be joining UVHS as a teacher of social sciences. I am originally from Manchester but I have lived in Cumbria for just under 15 years now and I love it. My passion for the social sciences began during my A levels and I aim to pass on my passion and enthusiasm to future generations of social scientists. For me, it is one of the areas of study that can develop an individual's curiosity and creativity whilst allowing for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world around them.

Other than the social sciences, I enjoy most outdoor pursuits so in my spare time I enjoy getting out into the Lake District whether this be on the water or hiking up a fell. I look forward to meeting you all and I am really looking forward to joining the UVHS team.

### **Ms Bushell : Teacher of Science**

My name is Ms Bushell, and I'm excited to be joining UVHS this September as a Teacher of Science. I'm a Furness native who has spent the past fifteen years or so living in Oxford and London - so I am really pleased to have the chance to return home to live and work in a place I love. In common with many of us here, I love running, walking and swimming in the Lakes, and have a little campervan (her name is Bertie) which sees regular adventures. I also love singing, and hear that the Music Department at UVHS is amazing! I'm looking forward to becoming part of the school community, and hope that I can share both my passions - Physics and the outdoors - with pupils and staff.



### **Mr Carter : Teacher of Belief, Philosophy and Ethics**

Hello, my name is Mr Carter. I am thrilled to be joining UVHS Humanities department to teach Belief, Philosophy and Ethics. I'm a born and bred Ulverstonian and attend UVHS as a student in the not-so distant past. Prior to training to be a teacher, I attend The University of Liverpool and completed a degree in Philosophy. Before starting this job, I worked as a lecturer of Sociology at Furness College. Outside of School I enjoy rock climbing and often spend my evenings travelling around the Lake District looking for new projects to climb. I look forward to carrying on with this in the school climbing club. I look forward to meeting and working with you all come September!

**Mrs Muldoon : Assistant Headteacher - Teaching and Learning**

I am delighted to be joining UVHS in September. I have been teaching English for 21 years in a range of different schools. I started my career in Manchester before moving to Lancashire to become Head of English. I was an Assistant Headteacher in two schools before I took on a school improvement role as a National Improvement Lead for English.

I am looking forward to meeting staff and pupils at UVHS. The school has a fantastic atmosphere and I am excited about helping students achieve in all areas: academic and extra-curricular. Being involved in the wider school life is something I really enjoy.

In my spare time, I love running and enjoy cycling and swimming. I also have a dog, Cooper, and my family and I love spending time at the beach with him.



## Return to school in September

We are staggering the start in September as the DFE have instructed us to test the children as they return to school.

The asymptomatic home testing programme is being paused for students in secondary schools over the summer holidays. If you wish to access rapid lateral flow testing, you can continue to do so by ordering LFD test kits from GOV.UK or by collecting kits from your local pharmacy.

We are unsure about the COVID situation we will face in the autumn, so we want to be prepared for all scenarios. Subject to public health advice, testing may restart on return in September. If it does, we expect to offer your child **two** tests on-site before continuing regular testing at home. This will unfortunately cause some disruption to the start of the school year.

Day	Lesson 1-2	Lesson 3-4	Lesson 5-6
<b>Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September</b>	<b>Y12 testing throughout the day</b> after registering to join Sixth Form		
<b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>7.1-7.4</b> testing 9am <b>7.5-7.7</b> testing 10am	<b>Year 12</b> testing catch up <b>Year 7</b> Transition Timetable	<b>Year 12</b> testing catch up <b>Year 7</b> Transition Timetable
<b>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>11.1-11.4</b> testing 9am <b>11.5-11.7</b> testing 10am <b>Year 7</b> normal lessons <b>Year 12</b> Induction	<b>Years 7/11</b> normal lessons <b>Year 12</b> Induction	<b>13.1-13.4</b> testing 1pm <b>13.5-13.7</b> testing 2pm <b>Years 7/11/12</b> normal lessons
<b>Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>10.1-10.4</b> testing 9am <b>10.5-10.7</b> testing 10am Y7/11/12/13 normal lessons	<b>Years 7/10/11/12/13</b> normal lessons	<b>9.1 -9.4</b> testing 1pm <b>9.5-9.7</b> testing 2pm Y7/10/11/12/13 normal lessons
<b>Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>8.1-8.4</b> testing 9am <b>8.5-8.7</b> testing 10am <b>Year 7/9/10/11/12/13</b> normal lessons	<b>All year groups</b> – Normal lesson 3 <b>Tutor Time lesson 4</b>	<b>All year groups</b> in normal lessons.

There will be a staggered start to the new term with different year groups completing their first LFD test on different days. Students should arrive at school for the first time on the day, and at the time, listed above. They will be directed by staff as they arrive. They will complete their initial LFD test and begin normal lessons as soon as a negative result is recorded. If a student has a positive result parents will be contacted to arrange to collect their child.

The second test will be carried out during lessons, approximately 3-5 days later. This is similar to the very successful program we followed last March, when school reopened to all students. If you gave consent to test your child in March there is no requirement to give consent again. If you have not yet given consent for your child to be tested, or your child is joining us for the first time in Year 7 or Year 12, please fill in the short online form available here <https://www.uvhs.uk/covid-test-consent-form>

This is the most effective way to reduce the risk of transmission and support the continuation of face-to-face education. Testing twice weekly is helping us stay ahead of the virus by spotting new outbreaks quickly and planning our response. The preparations that schools are advised to take are subject to further public health advice and the latest position on prevalence of the COVID-19 virus. If testing is not taking place in schools next term parents will be contacted in September and the term will begin as normal. Year 7 will have a Transition Day on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September and all other year groups will return to school on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup>.

On returning to school you will find we have kept some of the measures that we have used successfully during the pandemic either because they are intrinsically of benefit in keeping children and staff safe or because they will allow us to increase the level of our protective measures if there is an outbreak and a requirement to implement an action plan.

- The one way system will remain in place for the inside of buildings.
- Capacity in classrooms will return to normal, but the desks must remain in rows facing forwards.
- Parent's Evenings will remain through the School Cloud.
- Hand washing regimes and hand sanitiser dispensers outside classrooms will remain.
- Staff should still consider ventilation and open windows/doors when the weather permits.
- We will continue to use the sanitising machines.
- A daytime cleaner will continue to work during the day to keep the toilets clean.
- Student Services will remain where it is.
- Students will retain lanyards.
- We will keep specific areas on the field for each year group when the fields are open.
- As a trial we will allow students to eat packed lunches in their form rooms, providing they respect the space.

With these exceptions the school will be back to normal, with all the richness of normal lessons and extra-curricular activities.

So, we come to the end of an incredibly challenging year. Who could have imagined what was in store for all of us when we returned to school in January of 2020? Many people in our community have lost loved ones or suffered hardships whilst many have risen to the challenge of supporting society in a dark hour. Everybody's experience has been different. Our children have continued to amaze, not only with their continued achievements inside and outside school, but also with their adaptability, perseverance and hard work in difficult circumstances. As a school we have received touching levels of support from our whole community; we could not have got through this year without it. I would like to end by thanking everyone, not only for your overt support, but also for your forbearance with the decisions we have made. We know we have not got everything right, but we have tried to and we have come through stronger and more confident. I understand clearly that I have had advantages not necessarily shared by all Headteachers in other parts of the country, I have already mentioned the support of the community and the calibre of our children, but personally I have been supported by a fantastic leadership team and the teaching and non-teaching staff at UVHS have been simply brilliant over the last 18 months.

This is a great school and a great community, have a wonderful summer and join me in hoping for normality in the coming year.

With best wishes.



**Matt Hardwick**  
**Headteacher**