**DOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**22 March 2021**

**Down High School Welcomes Back Pupils in Years 12-14**

After a sustained period of closure in response to the public health situation, Down High School is looking forward to welcoming senior pupils back to school on Monday 22 March. The school has been open for the children of key workers since the start of term, and pupils have been learning remotely throughout the period.

Down High School’s Principal, Mrs Perry, expressed her delight as pupils in Years 12-14 returned to the classroom. “School has been a very different place without the buzz of conversation and the dynamic that exists in classrooms. Our pupils will be pleased to return to school for a range of reasons. Of course, they will enjoy learning in classrooms and laboratories with their teachers, but they will also be happy to see their friends and re-establish the structure that school provides.” Mrs Perry outlined the steps the school has once again taken to ensure that the safety of pupils and staff is paramount. “Our caretaking team has been fantastic in getting the school ready for the return of pupils and staff. Our daily, continuous cleaning regime, alongside the ready availability of sanitiser and disinfectant wipes, will do much to mitigate the risk of transmission. Pupils and staff will engage in regular handwashing and other basic but essential prevention measures. This includes the mandatory wearing of face coverings throughout the school. We appreciate that this is far from ideal, but we all need to play our part in reducing possible transmission. With appropriate ventilation and social distancing, we are confident that pupils will be safe in school and will continue to act responsibly beyond the school gate. The availability of lateral flow self-testing kits will help in the battle against the spread of COVID, and tests will be available for our pupils and staff to use at home, with appropriate direction and guidance.”

Mrs Perry concluded by saying that pupils and staff were looking forward to returning to the classroom in a safe manner. “Our primary responsibility is to provide a safe and purposeful learning environment for our pupils as they re-connect with face-to-face teaching. Today is an important day as we move hopefully towards something that, while by no means normal, is still much more desirable than pupils being at home. It is just lovely to see everyone back.”

Pupils returning to Down High this morning were unanimously of the view that they were glad to be back. Views ranged from 'It is great to be back and spend time with friends and see teachers again,' to 'Glad to be back as I feel like we are starting to make some progress in the battle against COVID'. While some pupils said it would be difficult to wear a face covering all day, the pupils are happy to resume their friendships and face-to-face learning.

**ENDS**