

4 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

It is with optimism and excitement that I make my first contact directly to you as the new Headteacher of Test Valley School. I am highly aware that there may be some uncertainty in the school community as a new Head arrives. Let me assure you I am fully committed to doing my utmost to improve the life chances and opportunities of the pupils at Test Valley.

I pay tribute to the work done by Westgate, Mrs Dean and especially Ms Wilden in establishing a trajectory of school improvement. One which I aim, along with Mr Page and the whole staff, to continue and accelerate. I fully appreciate the impact Ms Wilden has had on the school, and I know how much she will be missed. We wish her the best of luck in her new role.

To confirm, I have been seconded from Crestwood Community School in Eastleigh, where I have been Head of School for the Shakespeare Campus since September 2016. The local authority asked me to take on this position because of my experience, approach, and my knowledge and understanding of the school community. Some of you will remember me from my time at the school when I was Head of Maths (2002-06) and then Assistant Headteacher (2006-13). Having spent eleven happy years at the school, Test Valley holds a special place in my heart. When Hampshire and the Test Valley Governors asked me to step in as Headteacher, it was an offer I could not refuse.

My initial objective is to ensure the school runs safely and smoothly right from the very beginning of the Spring Term. Systems and procedures will stay the same initially, but it may be necessary to make changes once I see how they are working in practice. I will keep you fully informed of any changes which will affect pupils directly.

In that regard, effective communication is vital to the success of a school community. Mr Page and I will endeavour to keep you updated regularly and will also be seeking parental feedback. To this end, I am instigating a weekly parent bulletin, which will be published on a Friday afternoon. You will also receive a parent survey before the end of next week and I would be grateful for as many returns as possible. Ideally, we would be able to meet in person and (COVID dependent) we will be looking for opportunities for this to be facilitated. In the meantime, my email address is at the end of this letter should you have any urgent queries or concerns.

Lastly, please let me remind you that pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits, 3-4 days apart. Further, following the recent government announcement, unless exempt, pupils should wear face coverings in classrooms and other indoor areas. Pupils must also wear face coverings when travelling on public transport and other dedicated transport to and from school. Please ensure that your child has a clean, washable face covering (or their exemption pass) with them each day.

The government has made clear its intention for GCSEs to go ahead in the summer. The Spring Term is particularly important for pupils in Year 11 and we will be working closely with pupils to ensure that they are prepared for the final exams scheduled to take place in May and June. We look forward to discussing your child's progress during the Parents' Consultation Evening on 27 January. Year 11 pupils will also be undertaking revision for the final set of Practice Exams, taking place between 7 –18 February.

I look forward to working with the whole school community, including parents, to realise the vision of Test Valley being a successful, small, rural, high-achieving school.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Gibbs
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Test Valley School



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