

Dear Parents,

## Welcoming Back All Our Students in September

Firstly, and most importantly, I hope that you and your family are well.

We are rapidly approaching the start of a new academic year. This is always a time of great excitement for some and a little apprehension for others. This year has been, and will probably continue to be, like no other, so I wanted to write to confirm arrangements, but also to reassure you that the full return to school will be effectively and safely managed. Over the summer break, we have been in school making all of the preparations recommended by the Department for Education, our Trust (United Learning) and Local Authority advisors; protective measures are in place and our incredibly thorough Risk Assessment documentation has been scrutinised and passed by the Trust.

Year 7 will be returning in full from **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**. We have taken the decision to stagger the start of the Autumn Term so that we can refine new systems and practice new routines *with students* in a small and controlled manner so that we all have confidence in the new school 'normal'. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September, Year 7 students will have the school to themselves and we have planned activities that will help build their confidence and make them more familiar with the school. Other year groups will join us throughout the following week, so by the time the school is full, our Year 7 students will be fully familiar with, and hopefully very happy in their new surroundings.

Before the summer break, I wrote to you about how we thought school would look and operate in September. This letter now confirms the final arrangements taking into account the latest guidance from official organisations. So ...

- Year 7 students will be taught lessons and socialise i.e. break and lunch, within their year group bubble. In order to minimise transmission risks, there will be **no** mixing with other year groups.
- The start of the school day will be staggered; again, this is to minimise contact with other year groups where possible. **Year 7 will arrive at 8.30am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September but then at 9.00am each day after that** and report to the Key Stage 3 yard. They will then be escorted to their base in school.
- Students in Year 7 will have their own designated area (Key Stage 3 yard) for break. Break wherever possible will be outside.
- Lunch for Year 7 is at 12.40pm. Students will have separate outside space available, for Year 7 this is the Tennis Courts. Students will not be allowed to pay for lunches with cash or by using the biometric scanner (thumb print). It is hoped that most parents will use Parentpay to pay for lunches. If you would like to use Paypoint, then please get in touch and we can organise this with you. Students who receive a free school meal will automatically be provided with a lunch each day.
- The end of the school day is also staggered to separate year groups. Year 7 students will leave at 3.00pm each day.
- Students in Year 7 will receive all of their lessons in a separate part of the school building; this is to minimise the risk of infection. All Year 7 lessons will take place on the A Floor. Students will still follow their full curriculum and

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specialist rooms will be available for most practical lessons e.g. Science labs and ICT. Physical Education will still take place but lessons will predominantly take place outside and contact sports will not be played;

- All areas of the school will receive more frequent cleaning and there will be hand sanitiser available on entry, and throughout the school. We will continue to encourage students to wash their hands regularly and promote the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach for any sneezes or coughs;
- Students will be provided with essential equipment for school e.g. pens, pencils. It is essential that these are looked after as sharing equipment is not allowed.
- After an initial period of adjustment to new routines, extra-curricular clubs and activities will operate. These will be different in that they will be year group specific and new safety measures will be in place;
- Breakfast Club will operate but students will be expected to sit within their year group in a designated part of the building and outside (but under covers) whenever possible;
- Students will be expected to wear full school uniform. School uniform is available from appropriate suppliers e.g. Pinders. If you have any uniform related issues, then please get in touch Mrs Mills at the Academy.
- The national guidance on the wearing of face coverings is potentially changing. We will review our position with the Trust and issue clear guidance once the national position is clear. We will communicate this in the usual ways – text, email and website.
- Parents will only be allowed on site to attend pre-arranged appointments. We are looking to minimise these in order to safeguard staff, students and the community. We will, as always, respond to telephone calls and emails as quickly as we can.

By making these changes, we will be able to follow the scientific guidance to ensure students are safe within the school. Students will be able to travel to and from school as normal but we would request that, wherever possible, they travel with students in their year group bubble and practice social distancing. If they are travelling on public transport, they must wear a mask.

We know that all students will require some degree of 'catch up' after the disruption of the past few months. It is essential that every student attends every day from the beginning of term so that we can quickly return to normal curriculum content. We will always support families in their efforts to ensure strong student attendance. Attendance is required at school and will be monitored as it has been in the past. Unauthorised absence will be treated as such and followed up accordingly.

Students thrive best when they have routine, consistency and stability around them. We will therefore be doing everything we can to ensure that, wherever possible, school life is as close to what they are used to as possible. All the academy's existing policies and expectations on issues such as behaviour and uniform will be in place as normal with updates to reflect new safety and hygiene measures.

The government's scientists have also set out what will happen if any student or member of staff displays symptoms of COVID-19. Firstly, it is essential that everyone – students, parents and staff – continues to follow the NHS guidance and that they do not come into school if they are experiencing any symptoms. We would ask every parent to keep

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any child displaying symptoms of COVID-19 at home and immediately inform the school. If any member of your household tests positive for COVID-19, please keep your child at home and inform us as soon as possible.

If a student becomes unwell at school with a high fever, new continuous cough or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they will be sent home. We will arrange for them to be looked after safely, separately from others, until they can be collected. They will be expected to self-isolate for at least 10 days and arrange to have a COVID-19 test.

Should we experience a confirmed case of COVID-19 within our school community, we will work closely with Public Health Sheffield (or appropriate agencies) to ensure the situation is managed quickly and effectively. Using NHS Test and Trace data, they will advise us on what next steps – if any – we will need to take as a school. We will be putting in place stringent control measures as per the DfE's guidance in order to minimise the need for larger groups of children to self-isolate should there be a positive case within school.

In the event of any degree of closure, we will immediately revert to the online learning that worked so well last year. We very much hope that we do not need to return to any form of lockdown but, if we do, we are confident that we will be able to continue with all students' learning from home. Once again, the support of parents in ensuring children access these resources will be vital.

Finally, we know that some students will feel apprehensive about returning to school after such a long time away. This is completely understandable, we will therefore, be taking particular steps to ensure that our pastoral support for each student allows for this and provides time and space for any worries or concerns to be addressed so that each student is able to enjoy being back at school.

Thank you for your patience and understanding over the past few months. Everyone at the academy is looking forward to welcoming our students back. We are entirely focused on making sure that in every lesson, every day, every student continues to learn and thrive.

I look forward to working with you, and welcoming all students back in September.

Yours sincerely



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