

20 August 20

Dear Parent / Carer,

As we approach the end of the academic year I wanted to write to you to reflect on what has been the most unusual academic year I can remember. I also wanted to share with you some of the plans as we very much look forward to next year and a return to a 'new normal'. Quite a few years ago now I studied for a qualification for headship known as NPQH. I am sure you will not be too surprised to hear that no part of that programme could have genuinely prepared me for the last few months. I can also say with absolute certainty I hope I never need to call on the experience in the future. Outwood Academy City is normally a vibrant and energetic environment where students and staff learn together, I cannot wait for that to return.

Since March the academy has remained open offering a vital provision for children of critical workers and our most vulnerable students, and more recently we have been able to supplement remote learning by offering academic sessions to students in Years 9 and 10 in school. I am proud of our students and staff for the way they have managed throughout these testing times. As many of you know, I am also a parent myself and I can confirm that the challenges of home learning have been felt even by the 'trained professionals' and so I also wish to pass on an enormous thank you to parents and carers for supporting your child with their learning.

It should also be noted that throughout the last few months we have managed to support Year 11 in their transition to life after the academy, celebrated the successes of some of the students through our awards events, delivered food parcels to over 200 families and engaged with Government schemes for free school meals vouchers and laptops and routers.

Looking forward to next year; last month the Government released the guidance that all children should return to school from September. We believe that education is critical to future life chances but also the mental wellness of students and are pleased with this announcement. However, the safety of staff and students is central to all our thoughts and we have developed a robust risk assessment for the return to ensure we can deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum for every individual. I have listed below a few aspects that we need to put in place to support our safe return:

Attendance

It is the expectation that all students will return to the academy as the government outlines mandatory attendance for all students with exception to those who are deemed clinically vulnerable by a medical professional.

COVID-19 symptoms

If any member of the academy community, students or staff should develop symptoms of COVID-19 they should not attend the academy. The symptoms should be reported to the academy at the earliest opportunity and those affected should seek testing, communicating the outcome with the academy. This will trigger our test and trace systems working in conjunction with the Local Authority and Public Health England.

Bubbles and zones

We are committed to delivering an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum, with controls which mitigate transmission risks. The school will be organised into year group “bubbles”, where whilst in school students will only come into contact with students in their own year group. Each bubble has been designated a zone within the school where they will receive the majority of their lessons.

Curriculum

Whilst over the past 4 months we have endeavoured to deliver an online remote learning platform, we recognise it will never have the impact of students working directly with teachers in the classroom. Our subject directors are working in tandem with heads of department to develop schemes of work and high quality lessons that will rapidly fill gaps in learning, and re-engage students as they return to the classroom.

The role of a teacher is to identify where a student is, where they need support and, working with the individual, ‘fix’ those gaps. We are determined that students should not be adversely affected academically by this pandemic and, working with parents and carers, we will ensure they are not disadvantaged by the time they have missed in school.

Staggered timings

We are conscious of minimising pinch-points and potential student gatherings such as at the start and end of the day both in school and in the local community. Therefore, we have introduced staggered start and finish times for the academy day.

Staggered timings

7	08:25	CLC Gate (annex building on Stradbroke Road)	Orange	8:25	14:30
8	08:25	Main Student Entrance	Blue	8:25	14:30
9	08:25	Top Car Park	Green	8:25	14:30
10	08:45	Stradbroke Road (bus stop)	Purple	08:45	14:50
11	08:45	Science	Red	08:45	14:50

We appreciate this may cause some concerns with siblings starting at different times and have a dedicated space for any students to wait if necessary.

The new academic year will commence on:

Wednesday 2nd September for Year 7

Thursday 3rd September for all other Year groups

Staggered breaks and lunch times

Break and lunch times are also staggered so that no more than one year group is accessing a space at any one time. To make this feasible we have created an additional dining room. We will have a limited food offer available for all but would recommend that, where possible, students initially bring a packed lunch.

The academy is moving to a cashless system from September and payments will need to be made in advance online, further details to follow. We will continue to deliver free-school-meals to those students who are entitled to these.

Tutor groups

We have changed our tutor groups from September, so all students in each tutor group will be from the same year group. This will enable us to deliver age and stage related pastoral support and maintain the year group bubbles.

Behaviour

Our behaviour system is built upon three key principles, being respectful, being responsible and being safe. This has never been more appropriate and important than in our current circumstances. We always have very high expectations of our students and we will be very clear in our expectations such as; adhering to social distancing, hygiene controls, movement around the academy, attitudes to learning and respecting safe practice for themselves, their peers and adults. We appreciate your support in relaying these expectations from home and the importance of positive behaviour at all times.

Travel

Our student catchment covers a vast area and we are conscious of how students travel to the academy and how this relates to our bubbles and social distancing, linking back to how and why we have staggered the academy day. We are working with the Local Authority, and the bus companies, to finalise the plans for travel to and from the Academy, and the detail regarding this will be communicated to you shortly. We still plan to run our school bus and we will post the route and travel times on our website once finalised, over the summer. The Government advises students to walk, cycle or travel by car to school. In some cases, students will be required to use public transport, students must wear a mask on public transport to limit the risk of transmission. If you use a reusable facemask current Public Health advice is that these should be removed and placed in a plastic bag and stored within their own school bag, for disposable masks these should be disposed of in a lidded bin which we will make available on entry, we shall continue to monitor guidance on use of facemasks. The academy bus will now run a second service to accommodate for those students in Years 10 and 11 with a slightly later start and finish time.

The September return guidance included advice regarding travel. How this is implemented is currently being considered by all parties. The link below will take you to the Travel South Yorkshire guidance page, this may help answer any questions you have.

<https://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/en-gb/newsupdates/travel-safe>

Local lockdowns and self-isolation

Should there be a future spike in local COVID-19 cases we will work with the Local Authority and Public Health Sheffield in taking action quickly, and we have systems in place to deliver immediate remote education provision for any students unable to access the academy.

Throughout the past few months there have been a number of ways that we have adapted and found better ways of working. We have now reached a very positive phase in these challenging times but we recognise whilst some of our students will be excited to return others will be anxious. It is important that we work together to support our students in returning to more normal surroundings and social settings as soon as possible.

We have now reached a very positive phase in these challenging times, with an opportunity to begin making steps to normalise and rebuild the wellbeing and education for our students; coming back stronger and staying 'better'.

I hope that you have a great summer break and we look forward to working with you and your child in the new academic year.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Downing
Principal