

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

21 May 2020

Covid-19 and Schools Update

May I take this opportunity to pass on my enormous thanks for all your support to date and most importantly hope you are all safe and well.

There is much speculation at the moment about how schools nationally may start to increasingly bring more students back to the classroom before the summer break. For secondary schools, attention has focused on year groups 10 and 12.

School leaders and governing bodies nationally are being asked to consider the most appropriate, local response to meet the government's ambition to provide some face-to-face support for these year groups. The Department of Education has initially issued guidelines to help schools to make these decisions for groups of students and focused principally on primary schools. It is fair to say that secondary schools are still awaiting detailed, clear and specific guidance from government on how to further make secondary settings safe for students and staff and implement their ambition in practice. However, the initial guidance is clear that secondary schools are not expected to open full time during Term 6, or to attempt to offer a pre-epidemic provision. I can confirm that we are not expecting any Year 10 or Year 12 pupils in school the week beginning June 1st unless eligible as vulnerable or key worker families.

Clearly, devising plans which eliminate risk to students and staff, provide a meaningful and worthwhile experience for young people, and which are sensible in the context of each individual school, is not straightforward, indeed, this is posing exceptional challenges to all schools.

The situation and scientific advice is changing frequently. As an academy we are, therefore, engaging in a range of work designed to take into account all the challenges we face and to identify sensible proposals about the next steps required to make our school as safe as possible and also to guide us in the additional measures we may need to take in the event of receiving clear guidance from government. The safety of everyone in our school community must, as always, be our absolute priority.

Keeping our school community safe

Our current strategy will be to continually review the changing situation, national guidance and stakeholder needs by concentrating on the following priorities:

1. Continue to refine and develop our current home learning provision for all year groups in Term 6. Mrs Banks, Senior Deputy Headteacher for Curriculum, has outlined these developments in an update letter to parents which can be found on our website.
2. Developing a regular School Community Well Being Update Newsletter which will keep everyone connected to latest developments. Mr Ewen, Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour, has worked with a range of partners to produce the first edition – again, available on our website.

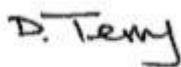
3. Continue working with a range of partners, River learning Trust and OCC to ensure the academy building and facilities are safe and adaptations made to learning environments to ensure safety in the light of any widening of student participation. Again, the academy awaits detailed guidance on this from government. Please refer to a Letter from Mr Paul James, CEO of the River Learning Trust available on our website.
4. To ensure the government's support for laptops and IT for vulnerable students is pursued and when devices are released we will contact eligible families as soon as we can. To be clear, at this point in the term, the academy has not received an allocation of laptops for distribution as yet. Please bear with us, we will be in touch when we have further news.
5. To contact Year 10 and 12 parents and students with proposals for some 'face-to face' support when the necessary national guidance, risk assessments and stakeholder engagement concludes that a small scale return for some students can be achieved safely.
6. The academy and stakeholders will review the changing national picture regularly to assess and formulate plans for a wider student participation ready for the new academic year as and when this proves possible.

An on-going priority is to continue work on the risk assessment of our school buildings in order to implement the safe systems and processes needed to keep our school community safe in the longer term. It would not be prudent to think that the world will have returned to anything that we would previously have defined as fully normal before September 2020. We must be in a position to fully understand and deliver a safe working and learning environment while making sure that the quality and range of education supports the good progress of all students.

We will be continuing to carry out a range of keep in touch contacts over the next two months to support students but also to capture the next steps required not just to make our school as safe as possible, but also to plan for learning in September and the term beyond.

May I thank everyone in our community for their resilience and support in these challenging times and just to re-state that the safety of everyone must be our priority.

Best wishes



David Terry
Interim headteacher