

**August 21<sup>st</sup> 2020**

Dear Parents and Carers

As the start of our new term is now less than a couple of weeks away, I am writing with further information about the special arrangements that we have put in place in these extraordinary times. First and foremost, I am really excited at the prospect of welcoming all of our children back to school. The Academy has not been the same without them and life for them has not been the same without school. For their emotional wellbeing, for their social lives and for their education, September marks an important fresh start and I look forward so much to seeing them all in school.

The new term does, however, bring with it new challenges. For some of our children, the last few months have been a time of great anxiety and we will need to put extra arrangements in place in order to support them. For others the greater issue will be that they have fallen behind with their education and will need extra help to catch up. I will write again nearer the start of term with further information on what we are doing to address these important issues. In this email I want to focus on the steps we will be taking to make sure that everybody in the Academy is safe. Although the number of people in Cheshire East newly infected with coronavirus has fallen markedly in recent weeks, we will, of course, continue to make the safety of our students and staff our very first priority.

We have been working throughout the summer on detailed risk assessment which sets out a series of important control measures. As soon as the detail of this important document is complete, we will put it on the website. However, for students and parents, we have distilled the main points into a 20-point guide which I hope gives the greatest possible clarity on the steps we will be taking and on the support we will need from our students and their families.

1. **We will stagger the start of term.** Year 7 will start on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. This will give our new students the chance to meet staff, to get used to the building and to understand all the control measures that we have in place. Students in Years 10-11 will return on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Students in Years 8-9 will return on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September. This will mean we can work with each Year group in turn to make sure that they understand all of the safety arrangements for their “bubbles”.
2. **We will stagger the start and end of the day.** The day for Years 7-9 will start as usual with form time at 8.40. For students in Years 10-11 it will begin with the start of lesson 1 at 9.00. Their form time will be at the end of the day. Once the term is underway, we will begin a programme of after school catch up sessions for students in Year 11 to help them prepare for their 2021 exams and catch up on the work they have missed since March. These will have the effect of extending the Year 11 school day to 4.00.
3. **Students will begin their day on the South Yard.** Unless they are travelling on the Sutton/Langley bus, students should arrive no more than 10 minutes before their designated start time. This means that students in Years 7-9 should not arrive before 0830 and those in years 10-11 should not arrive before 0850. They will line up in forms at their socially distanced muster points as they would for a fire drill and be taken into the Academy a form at a time for handwashing at the start of the day. Students in Years 10 and 11 who come on the Sutton/Langley bus will arrive at their normal time and wait at a designated point on the South yard until students in Years 7-9 have gone into the Academy.
4. **We will ensure no students with coronavirus symptoms enter the Academy buildings.** Before students enter the Academy they will be asked to confirm that neither they nor anybody they live with has any of the symptoms of coronavirus (ie a temperature, a new persistent cough or a change to (or loss of) their sense of taste and smell. **Please do not send students to school if they or anyone in your home shows any of these symptoms.**
5. **Students will be managed in Year Group “bubbles”.** Years 7, 8 and 9 will all be in separate “bubbles” and, wherever possible, kept apart from one another while they are in school. Following discussions with Cheshire East Council, who are happy for us to proceed in this way,

Years 10-11 will be treated as a single “bubble”. This is to enable mixed age teaching of pathway subjects. It is worth noting that, at 240 students, this combined “bubble” is no larger than a single Year group in many schools. There may be a small number of exceptions to this including, for example, ASPIRE, the isolation room and withdrawal rooms where 1:1 support is being provided. In these cases we will apply additional measures to ensure social distancing. Because they would involve additional mixing of bubbles, we will not be running breakfast club and homework club sessions in the first instance; we hope to re-instate these provisions later in the term.

- Breaks and lunchtimes will be staggered.** The school day will vary by year group with some groups taking their breaks and lunchtimes within lessons rather than between them according to the timetable below. Because they will be having the earliest lunches, Year 7 and 8 will have an additional afternoon break:

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	090	092	094	100	102	104	110	112	114	120	122	124	130	132	13	140	142	144	-	15	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	15	20	
Year 7	Form			Break							Lunch						Break				
Year 8	Form				Break						Lunch							Break			
Year 9	Form					Break						Lunch									
YY 10-11						Break							Lunch								Form
	Lesson 1						Lesson 2						Lesson 3								

- The Dining Room will be used by one “bubble” at a time.** This will enable alternating bubbles to be seated at the counters on stools and on the chairs and tables (facing the same way). This will mean that the stools and counters can be cleaned while the chairs and tables are in use and vice versa. Because the lunchtimes will overlap (see the timetable above, students will spend the first 20 minutes of their lunch break outside and then come into the dining room. Hot and cold meals in the dining room will be served in pots and “grab bags” to minimise queueing. Because Years 10 and 11 will be in the same “bubble”, they will use the dining room at the same time.
- We will maintain the circulation system introduced for the “rainbow school”.** This is almost (but not quite) a one-way system. It is clearly marked by white lines, floor arrows and overhead signs throughout the Academy. It is designed to reduce congestion on the corridors and to minimise the time students are face to face. It does make some journeys around the Academy a little longer and does mean there are times when students need to leave the building. Use of this one way system will make it possible for us to finish lessons at the same time as it minimises crossing in the corridors which is, in any event, regarded as low risk.
- We will amend the rooming timetable to reduce movement.** There are limits to how far we can do this while still giving students access to the full curriculum in specialist rooms. However, where it is possible, we will plan for them to stay in the same rooms.

10. **Students with SEND who need support from a TA will be withdrawn from lessons for targeted interventions.** To avoid TAs working too close to students, support will take place in separate rooms (such as work rooms or the conference room). This support will be under the direction of the class teacher. The length of these interventions will vary with the needs of each child.
11. **Students must maintain hand hygiene.** Students (and staff) will wash their hands on entry to the building and before and after breaks and wash their hands with soap and water on entry to the Academy and before and after breaks and lunchtimes.
12. **Students must maintain good respiratory hygiene.** We will continue to apply the routines of “catch it- bin it- kill it”. Students must have tissues with them in school and use them whenever they need to cough or sneeze. Once used, the tissues must be put in a bin with a lid.
13. **We are recommending that the majority of students do NOT wear face coverings at this stage.** This is in line with the government guidance which regards the potential risks from the accidental misuse of masks as outweighing any marginal benefits there may be from wearing them. We will keep this under careful review and monitor any changes to the guidance. The only exceptions would be where we had undertaken an individual risk assessment for a child with underlying medical conditions (including possible anxiety issues) and agreed that they should wear a face covering as an additional control measure. In such cases, we will provide detailed instructions on the use of face coverings, particularly on how and where they should be put on and taken off. If students wear face coverings on their way to school, they must be removed before they enter the building. Washable coverings should be securely stored in a sealable plastic bag; disposable ones should be disposed of in a pedal bin with a lid.
14. **Students will need to bring their own equipment into school. It will be important that students do not share equipment or borrow items from one another.** To ensure that they are ready to learn, all students should all have:
  - 2 pencils
  - 2 pens
  - A ruler
  - A rubber
  - A pencil sharpener
  - A glue stick
  - A reading book
  - A calculator

To ensure that they keep themselves and other members of the Academy community safe, they will need:

- A pack of anti- bacterial wipes
- A pack of tissues

In addition, students may also bring hand sanitiser and hand cream into school if they wish.

15. **Students will sit together at double desks facing the front.** The guidance is clear that, with larger groups working together in class, they will need to face the front wherever possible. This will mean that some teaching activities etc will need to be changed. Others may take place outside rather than in the classroom. Sitting at double desks does mean that students are slightly less than 1m apart and they will need to take particular care not to get any closer to one another than is absolutely necessary. There is a small number of specialist classrooms where it is not possible for all students to face the same way. In these rooms additional control measures

will be put in place.

16. **Students will clean their desk at the beginning of each lesson.** We believe it is important that students take responsibility for their own hygiene and the safety of others so we will ask them to clean the surfaces they will be working on at the beginning of each lesson using anti bacterial wipes.
17. **We will apply some additional school rules to ensure students are complying with the risk assessment.** Because the safety of everybody in the Academy depends on students adhering to all the measures that we set out in our risk assessment, we have drawn up an “addendum” to our behaviour policy. This identifies a number of behaviours which we will regard as more serious than usual and for which there will be a series of consequences of increasing severity. As always we will be aiming to educate our students before resorting to punishments, but it is important that students and parents understand that, in the current circumstances, we may need to resort more readily than usual to sanctions up to and including exclusion if students are not co-operating with the requirements of the Risk Assessment.
18. **Subjects will carry out subject specific Risk Assessments.** There need to be some adjustments to the curriculum and to the activities students undertake. There is national guidance in many subjects and we will apply this to our particular circumstances. One example of this is that we will not use the PE changing rooms in the first instance. **On days when students have PE, they should wear their PE kit all day.** This will, in turn, affect the PE activities we undertake. **On all other days, students should wear normal school uniform.**
19. **We will only allow essential visitors into school.** These will, include, for example, visitors who are attending statutory social care or SEND meetings. Where possible, meetings with parents should take place over the phone or using a video conferencing platform. Where face to face meetings with parents are essential they will take place **by appointment only** in the waiting room. I know parents will understand the reasons for these precautions and I hope it will not be too long before we can welcome more parents into the Academy.
20. **We will fully engage with the NHS test and trace system.** If any student develops symptoms of coronavirus in school, we will follow the test and trace system and provide parents with information as to how they can do the same. Details of how test and trace works can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>. In these circumstances we will also be in contact with our local health protection team and they will advise us on whether it is possible to remain open as normal or whether partial or complete closure is required. We will, of course, act on whatever advice we receive.

All these measures will apply to all of our students. There may be some students, however, for whom additional measures are necessary. It may be that they have an underlying health condition. Someone at home may be particularly vulnerable. They may have other reasons for feeling particularly anxious. In these circumstances, we are very happy to discuss whether a more personalised Risk Assessment would be helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me on [head@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:head@macclesfieldacademy.org) if you think this would be helpful.

Finally, it is important to remember that, of the 168 hours in every week, students will spend less than 35 of them in the Academy. It is, therefore, essential that they take great care to make sure they are not putting themselves at risk of infection outside of school. There are still important restrictions in place about gathering with other people and meeting in other people’s homes. We will be reminding them in school about the importance of complying with these restrictions; it would be very helpful if you could do the same at home. The government guidance on staying safe outside your home can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home>

I hope this is all clear. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on [head@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:head@macclesfieldacademy.org). The start of a new term is always accompanied by a mixture of excitement and nervousness. This is often as true for teachers (especially Headteachers!) and other

staff as it is for children. This term feels as though it is bringing with it added both added excitement and added nervousness. However, I have said it before and I will say it again: we are all in this together and together we will find our way through all the all the challenges and opportunities that the new term brings.

With every best wish

Richard Hedge

Headteacher