

**September 15<sup>th</sup> 2020**

Dear Parents and Carers

I want to start by thanking you for the many messages of support (and sympathy!) that have come into the Academy over the last few days. These are difficult times for us all but I continue to derive great strength from the way that staff, students and parents across the Academy community are doing their very best to make the return to school work as well as it possibly can in such unusual, confusing and worrying circumstances.

As the term develops, and as students have more social contact than many of them have had for several months, it is inevitable that students will develop a variety of symptoms and minor illnesses. Inevitably, some of these will be sent home as a result. The challenge for parents and schools will be to tell the difference between these symptoms and those of coronavirus which are defined by the NHS as:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Over the last few days, deciding on the best ways to manage students who self-report as feeling hot. Government advice to schools has been (in line with the more general NHS advice above) not to take students' temperature. However, like many schools we are having to review our position on this in the light of the reality of implementing the guidance in practice. In cases where a student reports that they are feeling hot, it is likely that we will begin use of an infra- red thermometer within the next few days.

Even so, there is still likely to be some ambiguity over symptoms. Even if there were no Covid pandemic, most days over the winter, a few students would go home feeling unwell. We will, therefore, continue to err on the side of caution and where we believe a student is showing any of the Covid-19 symptoms listed above, we will ask parents to monitor them closely and, if the symptoms persist, to order a test immediately (recognising that this may well be easier

said than done). In these circumstances the whole household would need to self-isolate until the test results were known.

A couple of parents have asked about our position on face coverings. The government guidance remains that they are not recommended at this stage although Headteachers now have more discretion than they did earlier. We are currently allowing the use of face coverings and they are being worn by a number of staff and students around the Academy. The government guidance highlights some of the risk as associated with taking the coverings on and off and the issues for students affected by conditions such as autism or asthma. I have also been concerned at reports from other schools (not in Macclesfield) of discarded masks left in the corridors or on the playground. At present, therefore, I think our position on face coverings continues to make sense and to reflect the best balance of risk (not least given the facts that we have lower numbers and wider corridors than many other schools) although it is one which our Health and Safety Committee will continue to keep under review.

While ensuring that the safety of our students remains our top priority, it is important that we also retain our focus on our recovery curriculum so that we can support all of students academically on their return to school. For students in **Year 7** (apart from the transition group for whom individual support arrangements are in place) this means that students will remain in mixed ability teaching groups while we get to know them and to assess the best ways of ensuring that they have the right level of support and challenge with their learning going forward. This means that at different times over the next few weeks, they will take Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs), Reading Age Tests and Progress Tests in English (PTE). I should say at this point that we have been delighted with the way that our new students have settled into school over the last couple of weeks and with the start they have made to their different subjects. I am lucky enough to be teaching three of the forms for History this year and have been really impressed with their confidence and their readiness to contribute to lessons. Our Year 7 students will also be following a customised enrichment programme this half term to make up for the transition activities they missed over the summer.

In **Year 8** the emphasis will be on reading and writing. All of our students had individual writing targets from the PTE tests they did last year and these will be used in all subjects to support the development of their writing through this year alongside reading activities in lessons and form time. Over the Year we will also use some of the Year 8 enrichment time for focussed English catch up

sessions. In addition, a number of students will be following the IDL reading programme in form time. It may be that some students require further, more individualised support and we will be assessing this over the course of the next few weeks. If you think this is something from which your own child would benefit, please contact Dr Kelly, our Key Stage 3 Progress Manager on [sarah.kelly@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:sarah.kelly@macclesfieldacademy.org).

Our **Year 9** curriculum has been overhauled so that all of our students will take the full range of subjects this year so that they have more time to prepare for the beginning of GCSE subjects next year. In addition, they will have extra provision in English and MFL as part of the enrichment programme. Those students not taking MFL will also have additional Maths and English lessons as part of their main curriculum. Again, if you think your son or daughter would benefit from more individualized support, please contact Dr Kelly.

Students in **Year 10** have just begun their new pathway subjects. We have allocated an extra lesson a fortnight to each of these subjects to relieve some of the pressure on Year 10 students in preparing for their first exams in 2021. We are currently awaiting details of the governments National Tutoring Programme and will give Year 10 students needing extra help in English, Maths or Science priority access to this programme. If you think this is something that your son or daughter would benefit from (or if you have any other concerns over progress in Year 10 or 11, please contact Mrs Dooley, our Key Stage 4 Progress Manager on [vicki.dooley@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:vicki.dooley@macclesfieldacademy.org).

Approximately half of the students in **Year 11** have now been allocated places in one of our Additional Core Learning Groups where they will have extra lessons in English, Maths and Science as an alternative to their second pathway subject. The demand for this programme has been such that we have created an additional group since the start of term. We will also be extending the school day for year 11 students to 4.00 on three days each week to enable them to have an additional lesson in each of the core subjects. This programme will begin in the week beginning 28<sup>th</sup> and full details will follow in the next few days.

Amid all of this, we are also planning ahead against the possibility of a future complete or partial closure. There will be more details about this in my next email.

With so much going on, I shall endeavor to continue to send all parents a weekly email as I did throughout the closure period. However, please

understand that in addition to the normal demands of running a busy school, our staggered breaks and lunch times now mean that we have almost four hours each day of breaks to supervise as well. This may mean that it takes us all rather longer than usual to respond to individual phone calls and emails.

It has been a busy start to the term but it remains an absolute pleasure to have our students back in school. It is also gratifying that so many of them also seem pleased to be here! My favourite conversation so far was when a Year 7 student told me I reminded her of her granddad- because I was old, kind and funny. It is moments like that that remind us all how glad we are to be back!

With every best wish

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hedge', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**RICHARD HEDGE**

Headteacher  
The Macclesfield Academy  
Park Lane  
MACCLESFIELD  
SK11 8JR

**Email.** [richard.hedge@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:richard.hedge@macclesfieldacademy.org)

**PA: Lara Nolan**

**Tel. 01625 383113**

**Email:** [lara.nolan@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:lara.nolan@macclesfieldacademy.org)