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25<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians

## Return to School Arrangements – September 2020

With the start of term nearing we wanted to write to provide some further detail regarding the arrangements in place to ensure a safe and effective start to school.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming our students back into school on Monday 7th September. We hope that the students are also looking forward to a return to in-school learning, seeing their friends and teachers again and taking what will feel like a big step back towards normality.

We can confirm that whilst we have made some changes and some lessons may have a slightly different feel, we will be offering a full and rich curriculum and our students will continue to access all of the lessons that they have previously accessed.

The information below outlines the steps that we have taken to prepare for a safe return of students and provides details of what the school day will look like for our staff and students.

Firstly we feel it is important for you to understand the national expectations that the Government have of us for reopening school in a safe manner:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

*The following points are identified as essential measures:*

- *a requirement that people who are ill stay at home*
- *robust hand and respiratory hygiene*
- *enhanced cleaning arrangements*
- *active engagement with NHS Test and Trace*
- *formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable*

*How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:*

- *grouping children together*
- *avoiding contact between groups*
- *arranging classrooms with forward facing desks*
- *staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible*



You will understand that the most significant challenge for schools nationally, particularly secondary schools because of the specialist nature of teaching, is reducing the contact and movement between pupils. As you will appreciate much time and effort has been invested in achieving this and, consequently, the following measures will be in place:

### Staggered start and end of day times

- We will have a slight staggering of the school day, this will relieve some pressure and reduce the numbers of students accessing the site at one time and enable the flow of pupils to be distributed across a longer period of time
  - **Years 10, 11 and 13 will start school at 8:45am and finish at 3.15pm**
  - **Years 7, 8, 9 and 12 will start school at 9.00am and finish at 3.30pm**
- In all cases children will start the day in Period 1 with Form Time taking place at various times across the school day (see image below).
- **Wednesdays will see all students start school at 9.00am**, this is to enable us to put in place an additional 30 minutes of staff training each week, to support our staff to adapt to our new and ongoing challenges. Students who are reliant on public transport will still be able to access the school site from 8:30am onwards as normal.

### Staggered lunch and break

- You will see from the image below that we have a slightly staggered lunch and break time
- In effect all students will have Form Time and break in various combinations between 9:45am and 10:30am when they will return to Period 2.
- Lunch time for all students will take place between 12:30pm and 1:15pm.
- Further detail regarding the timings of lessons will follow next week.

### Designated serveries and recreational areas

- To help ease congestion at break and lunch we have invested in an additional outdoor servery that is sited on our playground near PE. Each year group has a designated area in school and a designated area where they will access school meals at break and lunch time. Whilst we have enhanced our servery capacity, we still encourage you to consider sending your children with a packed lunch to help ease congestion at busy lunchtimes.

Year	Food Servery	Recreational area
7	Main Canteen	MUGA
8	Main Canteen	Astro
9	Food Pod (Playground near PE)	Blue containers adjacent to the Cadbury building and old PE changing rooms
10	Food Pod (Playground near PE)	Science yard
11	Cube under library	Outside Godwin building
12	Sixth Form servery	Sixth Form communal spaces
13	Sixth Form servery	Sixth Form communal spaces

Our intention, by having designated spaces, is to minimise as much as possible the interactions between different year groups, enabling us to restrict any potential transmission of illness between year groups.

## **Wet Weather**

Traditionally when we have had wet weather we have permitted students to spend lunch and breaks in designated classrooms. This is no longer an option; consequently we ask that students are aware that break and lunchtimes will be spent outside and they must bring a coat or waterproof jacket on days when bad weather is forecast.

In order to support this we have invested in several large canopies; these have hugely enhanced our covered outdoor spaces and will improve facilities for students during wet weather.

## **Pupil Movement**

One of our largest considerations is the movement of our students around school between lessons. In order to support this we have taken a number of steps to:

- reduce movement around school
- reduce the number of students that our staff work directly with
- reduce the number of different students that each child works with during the day
- reduce the number of shared workspaces that pupils use throughout the school day.

## **Longer Learning Sessions**

Many of our lessons (particularly in Key Stage 4 and 5) will now be 2 and even 3 hours long. We are very excited about this prospect and feel that this longer period of time will really enhance our rapid recovery teaching and learning program. As a consequence, these longer learning sessions will have a different feel to the hour long lessons that our students have become accustomed to. There will be a range of activities in each learning session which will increase our capacity to evaluate current knowledge, plan future knowledge and provide feedback.

In terms of safety, this is an important adaptation; it will result in students accessing far fewer classrooms, coming into contact with a smaller number of their peers and fewer staff each day. It will also vastly reduce our movement around the school building. Lesson changeover is currently a very busy and congested time, this step will not remove this entirely but will reduce this dramatically.

## **One Way System**

We have a one way system now in each building; this is very important in reducing congestion and limiting the close interactions that students would have with other students outside of their year group. Mr Hooper and I will be sending all students a brief video update via their Edulink account. We would like all students to watch this prior to their return to school. In it we will summarise each building's one way system. We will also discuss some aspects of the information within this letter and changes to our behaviour systems and expectations. We would encourage you to watch this with your child.

## **Behaviour**

It goes without saying that, in the best of scenarios, a school of 1800 students requires sensible behaviour and a commitment to making good choices to support the smooth running of the school for everyone. Our new working conditions make this even more significant. It is very important that students understand that now, more than ever, we have to draw on our excellent sense of unity and team work to work together to keep all of us safe and maintain a safe and highly effective learning environment.

To this end we will continue to put great value in our Three Golden Rules:

- **We are part of a team**
- **We always do our best**
- **We always do as we are told**

It is essential that our students understand our expectations, changes to our working systems and new rules that are in place to support everyone. They need to abide by the new systems at all times. We would really appreciate it if you can spend some time reiterating this to your child. The alterations that we have made are essential changes to ensure that our school can open and deliver school based learning safely. Pupils that do not conform to expectations or disregard new rules and systems jeopardise the safe running of this school and put all of us in our school and community at greater risk. This message will be emphasised at the start of the school year.

We will cover further changes to school arrangements in separate letters at the start of the year. This will include detail regarding an updated Home School Agreement and an updated Behaviour Policy. We will also be making changes to the detention system. It no longer is appropriate for us to have a lunchtime detention that serves all year groups. Therefore each year group will have after school detentions on a Tuesday and Thursday evening.

## **Hygiene**

We have taken a number of steps to ensure that our school is clean and that we can develop an even stronger hygiene culture amongst all students and staff. This is an essential component of our safe operation and to reduce the risk of any transmission.

### **Increased cleaning**

We have again increased our cleaning capacity and have more capacity now for cleaning staff to work throughout the school day, wiping down communal touch points such as handrails and door handles. This will also enable us to increase the cleaning schedule of toilets and communal areas. Whilst this will help, we also wish to stress again the need for each individual to support this. Reducing the number of surfaces touched and having good hand and respiratory hygiene will all help keep the school clean and safe.

### **Toilets**

We have also invested in a new toilet block. These temporary toilets will reduce some of the pressure on our existing facilities.

### **Hand Sanitiser**

An important part of our safe operating systems is that all children develop and maintain good hand hygiene. To support this we have hand sanitiser dispensers in each classroom and in key communal areas. It is essential that on arrival in each lesson, each child sanitises their hands. In addition to this we will ask that as each student enters the classroom they take an antibacterial wipe, from the front of the classroom, and uses it to wipe over their desk or work station. They can then deposit this wipe in the lidded bin as they leave at the end of the lesson. Students are welcome to bring their own personal hand sanitiser if they wish to.

## **Masks**

You will be aware that National Guidance does not currently support the wearing of masks in schools by students or adults. We respect and understand this, but are also aware of a range of feelings about the use of masks. Each one of our students and staff have had a different and unique experience of the last 6 months. Consequently we have taken a view that masks can be worn by staff and students, if the individual feels more secure in doing so. We do ask that if your child would feel more comfortable and safer wearing a mask that you ensure the mask is sensible and appropriate for school. It should be a plain colour without motifs and symbols.

## **Co-Curricular Activities**

We pride ourselves on the opportunities that exist at Arden beyond the classroom and how these contribute the holistic development and growth of our students. At the moment we have to prioritise the delivery of our curriculum, therefore this term will start with no or very limited co-curricular activities. We hope that this will change and as and when we feel we are able to safely offer additional clubs and activities we will introduce them and make sure that you and your children are informed.

I appreciate that this has been a very lengthy letter. I hope that the information included in this has helped you to understand the steps that we have taken so far in ensuring that Arden can open safely and return to delivering high quality learning to all of our students. We will continue to send you information as the start of term draws closer. The next communication will confirm starting details and Form rooms for all students for their arrival on the morning of Monday 7th September. **To give you reassurance we can confirm that school will begin on Monday 7th September. Year 7 and Year 12 will begin school at 8:45am on that day to support their transition into school, with the rest of our year groups arriving at 10am or 10:15am.** We will confirm the exact details of this during the week commencing 31st August 2020.

Thank you for your support and understanding in our work in re-opening school in a safe and effective manner. We are very much looking forward to having school fully open again and having our students back with us.

Yours sincerely



Mr Warwood  
**Associate Headteacher**