

20 July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

September 2021 Start Information

Welcome to the Open Academy. This is my first official communication to you as your child becomes a Year 7 Open Student - Your child's form tutor will be <<field>>.

This letter focusses on the term start plan and is our attempt to do the best we can from our understanding of **what we are being asked to do at present**. We have tried to balance the various needs and pressure on different Year groups and we hope that you will understand our approach.

Obviously, as the new Year 7 students have had no induction time in the Academy, we will aim to get them in first – closely followed by the Year 11, 12 and 13, who may face external examinations this year. We will then look to get in the new Year 10 and 9, who experienced a disruption at the end of term and finally the new Year 8.

We have been instructed to conduct 2 lateral flow device tests (LFTD) for COVID-19 as the students return. **After the first test, the children will return home immediately.**

Assuming their second test is clear, they will remain in school after that second test. As the plan is similar to previously, we know what capacity we have for testing and, although we will be using slightly different tests which only require a nose swab, we think the process and timings are just a little quicker. We are therefore confident that we can get everyone in lessons by the morning of Thursday 9 September 2021. To allow this to happen though, we will need the vast majority of students to test during the two staff training days on 2 and 3 September.

The testing timetable is as follows:

Testing Timetable

| YR GP /DAY | THU 2 nd AM | THU 2 nd PM | FRI 3 rd AM | FRI 3 rd PM | MON 6 th AM | MON 6 th PM | TUES 7 th AM | TUE 7 th PM | WED 8 th AM | WED 8 th PM | THU 9 th AM |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Y7 | 09.00 A-L 09.45 M-Z | | | | 08.40 | | | | | CATCH UP FOR ALL EXCEPT Y8 13.00 – 14:30 | |
| Y8 | | | | | | 12.30 A-L 13.30 M-Z | | | | | 08.40 |
| Y9 | | | 09.00 A-L 09.45 M-Z | | | | | 12.30 | | | |
| Y10 | | | | 12.30 A-L 13.30 M-Z | | | | | 08.40 | | |
| Y11 | | 12.30 A-L 13.15 M-Z | | | | | 08.40 | | | | |
| Y12 | 11:00 | | | | 10.30 | | | | | | |
| Y13 | | 14:00 | | | | | 10.30 | | | | |

So...

- **Y7 & Y12** back in full time from **Monday 6 September 2021 - Morning**
- **Y11 & Y13** back in from **Tuesday 7 September 2021 - Morning**
- **Y9** back in **Tuesday 7 September 2021 - Afternoon**
- **Y10** back in **Wednesday 8 September 2021 - Morning**
- **Y8** back in **Thursday 9 September 2021 - Morning**

Testing Notes

- To reduce waiting times for your child in school, we would like to stagger the tests within the Year groups alphabetically. **Please attend at the time advised in the chart.**
- They may have to wait a while so they should bring a reading book
- The yellow sessions marked on the table above are for first tests and once their test is completed, we will ask students to go home. If you have accompanied them, please feel free to wait in the car park
- The green sessions denote the second tests – if the student's second test is negative, they will be able to remain school and start their term.
- Wednesday afternoon is a catch up for students who have missed their second test slot. **If they miss their first test slot you will need to contact the Academy to see when we can fit them in.**

Although it is a disrupted start, it does mean that everyone can be fully tested by the Thursday morning of the first week. We are hoping that the new Year 8 students will be through by break time and so miss little of Thursday as they get their second test done. N.B. there should be at least 3 days between the two tests.

Points to Note

- The test is a newer one which is a little quicker, so we are hoping we can deliver the tests in the timeframe above
- The test is purely nasal. We know some children struggle with this but we are asking all to give it a try
- It is possible that the rate will be higher in September, and things may have changed by then. In which case, I will write closer to the time with any changes or amendments
- By mass testing on return, we are following the guidance set out by the DfE which states that twice-weekly asymptomatic testing is not required over the holidays. It is worth noting however, that the local Public Health Services are asking people to carry on testing throughout the summer, so we leave that up to you. Test kits can be ordered easily online or picked up at most chemists
- As a parent/carer of a Year 7 student, we would ask you to sign a consent form for the testing. Only two or three students did not consent previously – thank you – so, once again, we hope you are willing to give us permission for the tests. A link to the COVID test Form is here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=W8ZO2qGEd0-AYQqaPv6mawrTvqI3YhEkIFp2E9w605UQjNaNFJJWVIYNDhHQVIXMTFLTjdHNTIEWi4u>

Face Coverings

As of 19 July, we have been asked to review our risk assessments in line with the latest government guidance. In essence, this is to proceed with caution. Face coverings may still be worn in school but are not compulsory. I appreciate that this is an area of intense discussion and debate right now, so if anything changes, I will write as we return with any updates.

Other Aspects of COVID-19 Safety

We will continue to regularly review our risk assessments and follow all DfE issued guidance. Most of our COVID-19 secure systems and processes will therefore remain including the one-way system, hand sanitising, separate entry to school and split breaks and lunches.

Hubs & Catch Up

We are very pleased with how well hub catch up has worked for many students so we will be changing the focus of hubs for the next academic year. Homework is essential and, as it is our main method of marking and feeding back to students safely, it has become even more crucial. Coupled with the fact that we have traditionally set less homework than most schools of our type, this is an area which we really need to improve upon. Hubs from now on will be used for students who are identified as not regularly completing homework, as it will give them a formal opportunity to catch up and keep up with homework tasks.

For students in Years 8-10, if your child has hub sessions on their timetable, we will be expecting them to attend as they have got behind on their homework this year. We will

review who is in hub on a termly basis – if they don't wish to attend hub, it is essential that they complete all homework set.

The Education Endowment Fund identifies homework and independent learning as one of the most effective ways to accelerate the progress of students so we are very keen to promote it from this year. Each student will get 3 pieces per core subject per half term, 2 pieces for Geography, History and MfL, and one piece per non-core subject. We will expect every piece to be completed to the best of the students' ability. A homework timetable for 2021-22 will be issued in the September newsletter. We will also be offering a homework club to support those who wish to complete homework at school on non-hub nights. I will write further about that in September.

Uniform Reminder

We have a strict uniform policy as a leveller for all and to remove any potential for fashion policing by peers. Please work with us to ensure we retain our high standard of uniform.

We do not allow facial piercings – where students have them done, they will be required to wear a plaster to cover them, or they can wear an invisible plastic retainer.

Uniform is to be as per the website. Trousers for boys or girls should be trousers not leggings or skinny trousers – suitable to wear their shirt tucked in – as is expected.

Many boys struggle to keep their shirts tucked in without a belt so that might be a good investment over the summer.

All should be in black shoes – not black trainers or trainer shoes etc.

Parent Voice

I am very keen that, COVID-19 allowing, we re-start the Parent Voice group. The last Kirkland Rowell survey that we sent home was completed by few families and for those who did, it appeared that many were unhappy with elements of our provision. I am really keen to explore this and find out what is leading to some having such a negative perception.

The old Parent SLT drop-in sessions did not attract many parents so I would like to try something new this year – so over to you – please do let me have your suggestions for a good way to bring parents together to discuss their experience of the Academy with me and my team. I am happy to come out to the community – perhaps to meet with a group at St Francis Church Hall, or to put on refreshments for coffee and chat once per month – do let me know what you would like.

For Now

I hope this information is helpful and that after a long and tiring term, your children can have a good rest and recharge. I will, therefore, leave you with just one last thing...
Have a great summer!

Yours faithfully

Mr J Ford
Principal
Open Academy