

Parent update Friday 20th March

Please note the Open Academy is now closed until further notice as per government advice (see below)

This email covers the following items

1. An introduction from the government guidance identifying the key principle of why the Academy needed to close to stop the spread of infection
2. A section of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Open Academy Keyworker Childcare (OAKC) we are being asked to provide
3. Further information for the vast majority of parents/students who are already getting to grips with the Open Virtual Academy (OVA)
4. Chaplains reflection and prayer

1. Introduction. The government guidance...

(Please see the full advice here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>)

“As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. That is why the government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing.”

And the most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.”

This Government advice is our guiding principle and I would like us all to keep in mind this purpose of the school closures and the above advice as the lens through which to view the following FAQ's for parents.

2. FAQs Open Academy Keyworker Childcare (OAKC)

Does my child have to attend if I am in one of the categories?

No. The guidelines say 'If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.'

I am not on the list but I need to continue working and have few options – can I still send my child to school?

No. Please see the overview statement for the principle and purpose of the childcare arrangements.

Will the school be open for extended times and in the holidays to support Keyworkers?

Not yet. We understand that this is the intent from the government but within the capacity of individual schools – as we find out what capacity is needed we will try our best where we can to provide a longer day / coverage during some holiday days. Updates will follow next week

Will my child be in lessons if they go to school?

No. It will not be possible to run a normal curriculum. They will therefore be provided with the same virtual curriculum as all children who remain at home

Will my child be taught by qualified teachers?

No. It is unlikely that we will have capacity for that, we will try to provide teachers and support staff who ensure that children are cared for and supported to access their online learning

Will normal discipline rules apply?

No. It will be difficult without a full team to manage challenging behaviour in the same way as usual. We will do what we can, however if children do not behave in a way which allows the childcare to function, they will be asked to go home and may lose their access to their childcare place with us for the future

Will my child need to be in uniform?

Yes. We believe it to be an important aspect order and control. Staff will be professionally attired and students will remain in uniform to promote a sense of order and discipline despite the challenging circumstances. It will also be important to identify their purpose for being outside or reason to travel when commuting to and from the Academy

Will my child get food at school?

Only Free School Meal Children. Packed lunches will be available for those on Free School Meals only in the first instance. Non Free school meal Children will need to bring in a packed lunch themselves

What Equipment should my child bring to the Academy for their childcare day?

The first priority is their reading book, along with their complete pencil case, books for the day, calculator and Knowledge organisers and or subject overviews

Are any exams going to happen this academic year?

We have been told through the government announcement that all Exams have been cancelled this year – please see my parental communication yesterday for my take on what might happen next.

I will only need Keyworker childcare support on certain days, can the provision flex around my needs?

If you are a Keyworker and only need childcare on certain days please liaise with the pastoral staff in the Academy from Monday so that we can agree needs in advance and be prepared for the right number of students

3. Further information to support the development of the Open Virtual Academy (OVA)

Thank you for your on-going support as we work hard to set up the virtual school.

General Points

- We know that students are adapting well to their new ways of learning with huge amounts of work completed via various on-line tools such as Sam-Learning and in tasks that have been returned to teachers for feedback; we are so impressed!
- Another useful tool that teachers are starting to set more work through is Seneca. A guidance document showing students how to register for this is attached.
- We are also very grateful to the queries and feedback from parents that are helping us to develop our virtual school. Please do continue to let us know about ways we can continue to improve - comments to myself or the office will find where they need to go!
- I also need to say thank you to so many of you who are taking the time to give us positive feedback – it is so motivating and helpful for the staff to know their efforts are appreciated – Thank you!

Well being

- A reminder that we want students to be able to manage the work set for them alongside developing healthy habits for remote working; screen breaks, exercise and keeping to sensible hours of working (ideally following their usual timetable).
- If you watched the 'One Show' on the BBC last night you may have seen that Jo Wicks is starting daily and free workouts for students are starting online from Monday morning as an idea; <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>
- It is also good for students to keep up social interaction by perhaps calling one of their friends to discuss the work set and share ideas. Another way for students to relax is to also continue to read for pleasure!

Library

- While the school is closed, students and families can access e-books via Norfolk Libraries.
- To borrow books students will need a library card. If they don't already have one, a parent or carer can sign up for one at the following link and it will be sent in the post: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-library-account/join-the-library>
- Once students have a library card, they can go to the following link to browse and borrow e-books and audiobooks which are then available on any digital device: <https://norfolk.overdrive.com/>

From The Chaplain

Was just looking at a couple of things this morning and was encouraged by them. "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved."- Hellen Keller

The Bible says something similar. "When troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So, let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing".

Despite the gravity of what we are dealing with, there are positives that will come out of this situation. Strange as it seems, consider it an opportunity for your endurance to grow. So, let it grow in our lives through serving others, loving our neighbours in all humility and courage.

"Those who bring sunshine to others cannot keep it from themselves" - James M Barrie

You all continue to be in my thoughts and prayers

God bless you

Mark