



Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome Back!

We are delighted to report that the Academy will be open fully for the Autumn term from next week.

For safety training purposes we are staggering the start of term, so please note when we are expecting students to start back at the Academy

For Years 7, 12, 13 term starts at 8.40 on Monday 7th September
For Years 8 and 9 term starts at 8.40 on Tuesday 8th September
For Years 10 and 11 term starts at 8.40 on Wednesday 9th September

Please note we ask that students arrive between **8.25 and 8.35** to minimise time waiting outside

Once term has started, all students are expected to attend every day as would usually be the case. Please see the attendance information later in this letter

Other Communications to Note

Along with this letter, I will be sending a further communication regarding COVID-19 health and safety in general from the latest guidance, and the use of face masks in particular around the Academy. This further communication explains the recent process, discussion and decision we have taken to **encourage all at Open to wear a mask in communal areas and corridors** but not the classroom. The letter gives full detail of our decision and how it will operate. This COVID-19 Health and safety letter also contains important information from the most up to date guidance that we would like all parents and carers to be aware of.

Open Academy is a COVID-19 Secure institution.

We have undergone a continuous cycle of risk assessment improvement and review since we first opened up for children of key workers. Our risk assessment has been checked by the DNEAT trust as being fully compliant with all local authority and national guidance. In summary this means we have an acceptable plan to do all we can to keep our community safe as they return to full time schooling. Our declaration of COVID-19 Secure Designation is available to read on our website

As we return, things will be different – A summary of changes

We will be taking all the steps we can to protect our community from the virus. The following is a summary of the main changes that students will notice upon their return. Please note how they have evolved since I last communicated with you in July as we respond to changing and updated guidance

We will:

- Reduce face to Face interaction through the use of a one-way system throughout the Academy
- Reduce face to Face interaction by ensuring where possible all classroom seats face forward
- Reduce infection spread through the maintenance of 'year paired', year group 'social bubbles' which will have separate break times and lunchtimes. The year group bubbles will have separate indoor eating areas and separate entrances to reduce social mixing
- Reduce infection spread by ensuring that all adults social distance to 2 Meters where possible and where this is not possible to 1 Meter alongside encouraging further mitigation by the use of face masks where possible

- Reduce infection spread by encouraging all to wear face masks in corridors and communal areas
- Stop the virus by ensuring that everyone uses the hand sanitiser provided on entry to every classroom, every lesson, every day (or hand washing with soap and water if necessary)
- Stop the virus by promoting good respiratory hygiene through the 'Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.' approach to coughs and sneezes

Curriculum and catch up – our new 3 R's Return, Repair, Recover!

All students will return to a curriculum designed to support them back to school life. Our 'Recovery Curriculum' has been designed as a program to help the students re-find their feet in school

Recovery Curriculum:

Tutor time will look different. We will expect students to read quietly for 2 sessions a week to get really good reading habits in place. During these sessions, individual students will have a return to academy life conversation with their tutors.

We are not able to have assemblies, so the vision and values of the academy will be promoted through a series of tutor activities starting with the themes of **hope and courage**. We will also remind students of our LEARNT culture which aims to train them in the best classroom learning behaviours.

In addition, there are 12 special 'Change Makers' sessions for students to complete at school and a workbook that goes alongside. Each session has an opening video from Matthew Syed and a motivational video at the end from another external speaker. Some sessions include an additional video from Kathy Weeks from the 'Dare to Be You' team. These sessions are designed to respond to the potential challenges that young people will face with mental health concerns at a low level on re-entry to academy life.

What are the key ideas? The package explores how students can be the makers of their own change and, as a result, change the world in which they live. They will explore:

- How hard change can be
- That a 'normal' person, mood or way of doing things doesn't exist
- How to diminish the doubting voicing in our head
- That we can embrace being different
- That kindness is crucially important
- How to choose our own path

Why did we write the 'Change Makers' programme?

After having come out of lockdown, we know that students may be nervous about returning to school; they are navigating huge amounts of change. Handling change is what we have to do throughout life and so we want to help prepare them for that. As they return to school and see their peers again, it is also important that they know how important kindness is, how difference is an asset, and how they can control their attitude, even if they can't control much else.

Finally, when responding generally to a potential mental health crisis, research shows that it is imperative not to assume that all people have had a negative experience – that can cause as much damage, nor have they had the same experience. Building resilience, being optimistic and working in social groups are often the key to coping with mental health worries. We therefore offer this program to help enable our students to thrive.

Repair Curriculum

Before the holiday I communicated about our repair curriculum and our suggestion of how we will catch up students who have missed significantly more work than others. Over the next week or so we will be communicating more details of the program and your child will receive their timetable which will indicate whether they have been allocated hub sessions and if so when. More information will follow next week.

Attendance

At Open Academy we believe good attendance is vital for students in order to progress well with their studies. Having missed so much during lockdown, we believe it is vital to ensure students attend full time unless they develop one of the main symptoms for COVID-19.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- **new continuous cough and/o**
- **high temperature**
- **a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)**

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

If your child or anyone in the household does develop symptoms, **please do not send them in to school** - you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/> or by phoning 111. Please see my further communication for more detail.

Our goal is that all students meet the target of over 98%. There is a clear link between how well a student has attended and the grades that they gain at the end of year 11, or the end year 13.

We know that parent/carers will make every effort to ensure your son/daughter attend school, that they arrive on time and are ready to achieve. However, we are aware that there are times when students will not be able to attend, to allow us to get the required information quickly the following pathways to inform us of the absence are in place.

Contacting the school when students are absent

1. **Telephone us on 01603 481640**
2. **Email us – student.absence@open-academy.org.uk**

We are asking for the co-operation of parents/carers to improve the life chances of your son/daughter.

You can help us by:

- Encouraging your son/daughter to come to school on time
- Telephoning on the day of an absence and sending a letter to explain absence on his/her return to school
- Let us know of any changes or circumstances at home which may affect your child. Any such information will, of course, be kept in the strictest confidence
- Ensuring your child has a high attendance rate. As a result of recent legislation, the Academy cannot agree to term time absences unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' surrounding the request. Research shows that there is a close link between high attendance and good results

In addition, a letter will be sent to all parents regarding Attendance at School and Legal Intervention shortly.

+Pay from 'ParentMail' and changes to our cashless catering system

+Pay is the easy way to make payments to Open Academy – Top up lunch money – Pay for lockers, uniform, trips and activities

- We would like to encourage you to use this system and not send cash into school to avoid staff having to handle money due to current Covid restrictions
- Please be aware we will not be able to offer change in school

Cashless Catering

Please note, we are now using a new catering company for our school meals Aspens. Details of our new provider are highlighted in the accompanying leaflet. Menus can be found on our website.

- During the current Covid pandemic **we are changing to a card system rather than the current fingerprint system**, each child will be issued with a card on their first day back which will be used to access catering and printers.
- Using +Pay to keep lunch accounts topped up means students do not need to carry money to school or queue to use the cash loader. Using the reminder alert service will give you peace of mind that your student will always have enough money for their lunch.
- +Pay is a convenient and secure way to pay for Academy meals. +Pay offers you the freedom to make payments whenever and wherever you like, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - safe in the knowledge that the technology used is of the highest internet security available.
- +Pay is an online shop. Top up your account, choose what to purchase and then check out. It is a simple and secure way to pay for items using your credit or debit card.
- For assistance using this system please email finance@open-academy.org.uk or telephone 01603 481640
- If your student needs to pay for a particular trip, activity or uniform purchase, an extra item will be visible for you to purchase. No more cheques to go missing in the bottom of a rucksack or tucked into a forgotten pocket.

SIMS Parent App

The academy uses SIMS Parent App to provide parents with electronic copies of reports, teacher assessment data, student attendance details and timetable information. Parents can also use the data collection facility to inform the academy of any changes in parental or student personal information.

Parents will receive an email from 'noreply@sims.co.uk' which contains instructions on how to sign into the app. It is important that this sender is not blocked in your email system and you should check your junk/spam folder if necessary.

If you experience any problems with SIMS Parent App, please email simsparent@open-academy.org.uk who will be happy to assist.

You will receive more details next week.

General Changes and information

- Visits to school are by prior appointment only
- Please be aware that we would strongly discourage parents from accompanying students on to the site. We are trying to keep the car park arrangements as close to normal as possible, however once on site the students will join their social bubbles and parents should not attempt to accompany their child into their bubble
- Parents only arrive for pre-arranged appointments which will usually be outside peak times

- PE lessons, there is no requirement to wear PE kit to school as may have been heard from other schools, changing room facilities will be available
- Please ensure that students bring their own equipment as we are unable to lend pens, pencils etc
- Please ensure your child has their own scientific calculator. If this is a challenge financially please ask your child to let their maths teacher know. We will be unable to distribute calculators for lesson use so they must have their own as soon as is practical
- It is important that you note that there will be many rumours regarding schools, lockdowns, outbreaks and other headlines. Please note we are already aware of communications stating that if a child tests positive for COVID-19 they will be taken away. **This is absolutely completely NOT true**, however I fear it is the latest of many such scares, so please respond only to our official communications that we will send either in the form of letters home, our weekly email or via our website.
- We will post all communications on the website so, if you are not sure if it has come from us you can check if it is on our website

Reminder of school term dates:

- **Autumn term Mon/Tue/Wed 7/8/9 September– see above - Wednesday 21 October 2020**
- **Half-term holiday: Thursday 22 - Friday 30 October 2020**
- **Monday 2 November - Friday 18 December 2020**
- **Christmas holiday: Monday 21 December - Friday 1 January 2021**

In summary

We are fully ready to welcome everyone back and we cannot wait to see our students. We have plans to keep us safe, a new 3 R's curriculum of Return, Repair and Recovery, and although things will be a bit different, they will be a lot more like normal than we have experienced recently which we hope all will welcome.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any concerns or questions you might have. In the first instance please contact your child's Assistant Head Of Year who will make an initial response and may well be able to help or connect you to others who can.

Our Christian Values promote amongst others hope and courage, so I look forward to seeing your child present on their first day back ready to enjoy the challenges ahead with a hopeful positive attitude towards the term ahead.

Kindest regards

Jon Ford Principal