

21 May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will be aware, the government has asked schools to begin to plan to open for more students from early June, specifically year 10 and 12 students in secondary schools. I am writing to give you some details of our planning.

We will, of course, continue to maintain our provision that we have offered since March to the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. These arrangements remain unchanged. We are already in contact with these parents.

My absolute priority moving forward is to ensure that we only open to more students if and when it is safe to do so. I am working with my team to carry out a robust risk assessment to inform my decision-making.

At this point, I would like to make it very clear that my expectation, in line government guidance, is that this will be phased with very small numbers in the academy at any one time. This will be for year 10 (and 12) only for the summer term, alongside our critical worker and vulnerable children provision. All other year groups will continue with their online learning and will not be in school.

In order to ensure that I have an accurate overview of the number of students who are likely to return to school in June, it would help me if you would let me know if your child is intending to attend sixth form to access the limited provision that will be offered. This information will allow me to plan for safe staffing levels to support the children in the academy.

This will not be normal school provision and will be part-time and operate in line with social distancing measures, and in line with the government guidance. This provision will allow some face to face contact with students in year 10 and 12 to complement their online learning to help progress their studies further during the summer term.

The link to the survey is <https://forms.gle/Kd8EAQGUBeL6bmk46> It will also be sent to you by text but you only need to complete the survey **once** for each child. Please complete this survey by Thursday May 28th.

Our Approach to Opening

1. From 1st June, we will contact students in year 10 to discuss arrangements for the face to face support they will receive prior to the summer break.

2. Year 12 students will receive contact through their Post 16 tutors week commencing 8 June at the earliest to discuss arrangements for the face to face support they will receive prior to the summer break.
3. Once these arrangements are made, the face to face contact will be initially to meet with a member of school staff for a short time, such as 1 or 2 hours.
 - a. This face to face support will be in very small groups;
 - b. There will be little opportunity for social mixing;
 - c. Additional hygiene, cleaning and social distancing measures will apply. Further details will be outlined on our website in due course;
 - d. There will be staggered start and end times;
 - e. This provision will focus on pastoral support, mental health and wellbeing, academic support and planning for any additional time that students may need in school.
4. My ambition is to increase this provision over time, but only if and when it is safe to do so, which will be informed by the risk assessment. Government strategy will also impact on my decision-making through its monitoring of the R rate. However, it is important to note that there will not be a return to full time provision this academic year.

Online Learning

The aim of the face to face support is to supplement online learning. Online learning will be the main focus for students' study for the remainder of the academic year. We will continue to seek to strengthen this online provision, supported by our face to face arrangements and interventions.

Mrs Knowles and the post 16 Mentor team will continue to set Guidance for post 18 applications.

The tasks focus on careers, enriching students' understanding of the UCAS process and activities that will encourage students to think about writing personal statements, preparing for interviews, admissions tests and CV writing. The resources and tasks are set weekly, completed using Unifrog and submitted on Google Classroom so that mentors can access the documents.

To summarise what students have been up to so far, they have had the opportunity to complete a 'Personality' and 'Interests' quiz to help them to research the Unifrog 'Careers' and 'Subjects' libraries based on their quiz traits. Next we asked students to complete a 'Goal Setting' and 'Research' task to expand their ability to talk about their love for their subject and why they are applying to study it further at University level. Finally this week we have focussed on a 'Home Work Experience' task along with an optional 'Apprenticeship' research activity for those who are not applying to university. Alongside this, Mrs Knowles has recorded an assembly with an aim to direct students towards useful online resources such as webinars, courses, websites, summer schools and documents that they will need to prepare for applying to university using the UCAS process.

There are other ways that the Academy is using Google Classroom. We recognise that trying to maintain a sense of normality is a challenge and to address this we have developed two additional classrooms to support students. Firstly, students can access the Post 16 Mindfulness

Classroom. The classroom provides a wide range of resources, ideas and interventions for students to help manage mental health and well-being. In this classroom, students can access support from the Academy's Health and Well-being Practitioners, Ispace, who post mindfulness and self-care strategies. In addition, we have marked 'Mental Health Awareness Week' within both the VMG and Mindfulness classrooms as well as on our Instagram and Twitter feed. The national focus has been on 'Kindness' and we have been overwhelmed with students' response to 'Thank A Teacher' where over 500 individual nominations have been posted for staff. Students have also submitted poems, art, photographs of how they are marking 'Clap for NHS Carers' as well as recipes they have made at home. Finally, Miss Jude has kindly put together a Post 16 Newsletter and shared with students to keep us in touch, celebrate achievements and share updates whilst we are not together in person.

Post 18 Guidance: what next?

Next week, we will begin writing personal statements using Unifrog with clear, step by step instructions posted on Google Classroom. We will encourage students to continue to work on personal statements, alongside mentors throughout the summer term. In July Mrs Knowles will record an assembly to guide students to register on the UCAS website ready to apply with a completed personal statement in the new academic year.

In these unprecedented times, where we have all had to learn and work in different ways, I would like to thank you for your amazing support with your child's online learning and for the encouragement you have given your child to continue to learn online. Please continue to do this. It makes a great difference.

I am very much looking forward to seeing the children back in the building, albeit in a very limited and different way. We will all be working in a different, socially-distanced way and we appreciate your support in reinforcing with your child the importance of social distancing, good respiratory hygiene and hand-washing.

In the meantime, I would ask you to wait for your phone call to confirm your child's arrangements for the face to face support they will receive. If you have any questions or concerns, please do get in touch via the 'Contact Us' section of the website.

Yours faithfully

Brian Kelly
Principal