



9th July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware, the government released guidance last week on getting all students back to school in September. Since that point the senior team have been working together to plan the necessary changes needed to ensure that a full return to school is as safe as possible for staff and students. It is a long time since the school closure in March and we are all very much looking forward to welcoming our students back to school.

There are many changes that will need to be implemented and the school will need to continue to share information with you as we complete our detailed plans, however, at this stage, I want to share with you a few of the key decisions that have already been made.

Year Group Bubbles

At secondary school, government guidance explains that students will usually be placed in year group 'Bubbles'. This is the policy that Avon Valley will follow and therefore we will be staggering breaks and lunchtimes during the day to prevent year group bubbles mixing. We won't be reducing teaching time for students, however the school day will look different to previous years. Further details will follow when we have completed the timetable for the school.

It is not our intention to stagger the start of the school day as we feel that with so many students arriving by bus this would be unproductive. We will stagger the end of the day, with KS3 finishing a few minutes before the other year groups.


Travelling to and from School


Traveling to and from school on the school buses is an area of heightened risk as students from different year group bubbles will be sharing the same bus. We will work with the bus company to zone students on the bus but this can never be an ideal solution. I ask that you consider if it is possible for your child to walk or cycle to school, or be given a lift, as this may be a better alternative and reduce the risk of transmission

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The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College

Curriculum

The good news is that as challenging as the changes that we need to make may be, many things about our school will not be changing. Our staff are busy planning ahead to ensure that lessons are engaging and enable students to quickly get back into the habit of learning. We are not changing our curriculum as we are confident that the majority of our students have worked hard and made good progress over the lockdown period. Where students have found learning in lockdown more of a challenge we will support them to get back on track.

For year 11 students in particular, there is some further confusion as Ofqual are in the process of consulting over potential changes to the exams next summer. As soon as the outcomes are published, staff will have a clear understanding of what the assessments will look like next summer and of any adjustments that are being made due to the loss of learning time in the last few months. This will enable them to focus teaching appropriately when we all return in September.

Uniform

As we come to the end of term, I always remind parents/carers and students that we have high expectations regarding uniform and appearance. When students return the same uniform policy will be in place, including our expectations about appropriate hair styles and piercings. Student's need to have appropriate black school shoes, no more than one piercing in each ear and hair of a natural colour with no number 1 cuts or patterns in the hair. With 8 weeks until we return to school this is plenty of notice about our expectations and I will not look favourably on students who have chosen to have piercings, or die their hair an inappropriate colour in the last week of the holiday.

Hygiene

As a secondary school, the single most effective route to reducing transmission of the virus is for us to have exceptionally high hygiene standards. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly in classrooms that have sinks and to sanitise their hands at the start and end of the lessons. We request that all students carry a small sanitiser bottle in their blazer pockets to enable them to clean their hands regularly. The school has significantly enhanced its cleaning routines and will work hard to keep the building clean, with a particular emphasis on touch points.

Behaviour

Our school behaviour policy expects students to show respect to staff and each other and to follow the school rules, and appropriate sanctions are in place for students who fail to meet our expectations. There will however be some necessary amendments to the policy and I wish to make it quite clear that behaviour that endangers others by breaking Covid guidelines will be sanctioned most severely. Over the coming weeks please discuss with your child the importance of following rules without question or delay. We do not want to have to explain to students time and time again the reasons behind the decisions that we have made. The measures we are putting in place are to keep everyone safe and are there to prevent transmission of the virus.


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Attendance

I know that most parents and carers are very keen to get their children back into school, but there is also understandably a nervousness about the situation. The school is doing everything that it can to ensure that we have a safe and welcoming environment for students to return to in September but if there are parents/carers who remain worried for their children, perhaps because of health concerns or vulnerable relatives, we will discuss our plans with them and help as best we can. This will be done on a case-by-case basis.

Equipment

The government has made it clear that the school needs to clean equipment regularly and for this reason all students will be expected to bring a full set of equipment with them every day. Pens and other stationery items cannot be lent out by teachers or fellow students and each child will need to be responsible for bringing their own pencil case/ calculator etc

Throughout this pandemic, every decision that the school has made has been focused on keeping a balance between health and safety and providing a good quality education. As we move to the September restart we will continue to keep this at the forefront of all our decision making. There will be more information to share with you soon and in the mean time I ask that you talk to your child about returning to school and contact us in the remaining days if you have any concerns.

Yours sincerely

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