



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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'Excellence for All'

15th July 2020

Arrangements for September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the end of a very difficult academic year, I wish to thank you for your support and patience throughout this challenging time. We are now planning for a full return of students in September, in line with government expectations, and I would be grateful if you would take note of the plans as outlined below.

Department of Education guidance sets out the practices and procedures for schools to enable a return in the safest way possible. I am fully aware that returning to school is vital for children's education and wellbeing. However, I have to take a cautious approach to this as health and safety remains the number one priority for all in our school community. With this in mind, we are working to ensure that our risk assessment is reviewed and remains robust, and that our planning and actions are driven by the rigorous implementation of Public Health England 'system of controls'. These essential measures include:

- A requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements
- Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace

Over the last five weeks, whilst welcoming back limited numbers of Years 10 and 12, the school has operated very clinically in terms of hygiene practices and adhering strictly to the 2m social distancing rule. Students have been excellent throughout and have been very compliant with new rules. As you can understand, given the number of students on site will rise from the current 70 to 1,200 in September, we are now revising our systems on a wider scale to reduce contact and maximise distance between those in school where possible. Although we cannot create a totally risk-free environment, we are confident that by adhering to the controls outlined above, we can minimise risk whilst providing a full educational offer.

In order to reduce the risk of potential transmission, the government have advised schools to group students in year group "bubbles." This is what we are currently planning and will see the students housed in zones of the school to limit the amount of movement throughout the building. The students will stay in their designated classrooms, though subject specialist rooms will be prioritised for Years 10 to 13 to support their examination courses. Students will still be taught in their timetabled group and with their allocated subject staff; teaching staff will move to the relevant classroom to deliver the lesson. Regular handwashing and hygiene routines will also be built into the school day.

PTO

Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



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To ensure that all students understand rules regarding good hygiene, their Year group zones and maintaining distance, we have decided to stagger the time when they return back to school in September, as outlined below.

On **Wednesday 9th September 2020**, our new Year 7 students and those going into Year 13 will return to school. The day will start as normal at 8.45am and will end at 3.30pm. The scholars' bus service will run as normal. This will mean that Year 7 will have a day to familiarise themselves with the building, new rules and expectations and allow them to settle in comfortably for their first day in their new school. Year 7 need to enter the building through the North entrance and go directly to the Lecture theatre. We are awaiting further guidance and information from the Local Authority and Nexus about the safety of the scholars buses and whether extra services will be added to the bus routes to help with the non-mixing of year groups. I will contact you again during the summer holiday with further updates regarding this.

On **Thursday 10th September 2020**, Years 10, 11 and 12 will return to school from 8.45am alongside Years 7 and 13. Year 10 will go to the Lecture Theatre, Year 11 will go to the Septimus Hall and Year 12 will go into the Sixth Form building. The staggered start allows us to conduct Health and Safety briefings with each year group 'bubble', issue timetables, planners and other important information to ensure all are aware of the new routines and expectations. Our focus in the first instance has to be our exam year groups of Years 11 and 13.

Finally, on **Friday 11th September 2020**, Years 8 and 9 will return to school, meaning the school is at full capacity. The day will begin at 8.45am with Year 8 going to the Lecture Theatre and Year 9 going to the Septimus Hall.

School (as we know it) is going to be very different for many of us when we return. We are going to be offering a broad and balanced curriculum as far as possible, and the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom will not be diminished. However, the "normal" day-to-day life previously carried out in our school will not be present. We are having to make quite a significant number of changes to the running of the school day and how we use the limited space that we have in the building of a heavily oversubscribed school. Lockers will not be in use, and students will have to keep a small amount of their possessions with them in a bag for the whole of the day. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide hot meals to all year groups on a staggered basis as this would mean six separate lunch sittings, which would see some children having their lunch from 11.00am. The recent survey informed us that packed lunches from home are the most favoured option, though we are working through the logistics to hopefully be able to provide a hot lunch for one year group each day throughout the week. Students will have separate lunchtimes from other year groups and will only be allowed in specific areas of the school site. Students will have very limited movement around the school site and we will aim to keep all year groups in their designated year group zones as far as possible. Students will eat their lunch in their classroom, which will be cleaned in preparation for the afternoon lessons.

As you can appreciate, this is quite a task to coordinate and I appreciate your patience and support as we try to return everyone back to some degree of normality in school. However, we must be cognisant that the pandemic is still with us and we must do all that we can to minimise the further spread of this virus. The gradual return to full capacity over three days will hopefully allow us to do this safely and with some degree of caution. As you are aware, decisions from central government are often thrust upon us, sometimes requiring us to make necessary changes to previous plans. In light of this, we will be continually reviewing the effectiveness of our risk assessment and updating all parents and carers when any changes occur.

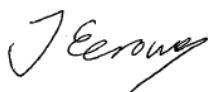
I will be contacting you again throughout the summer holidays, with any new information that needs to be shared. I hope to have more information from the Local Authority and Nexus, regarding the scholars' bus service and your completion of the recent survey about public transport is helpful in accessing further provision.

In order to give you further information and help ease the transition of students back to school we have produced the guidance attached to this letter; please take some time with your child to read this.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing care and support; it is much appreciated and critical to us at such a demanding time. The last four months for all of us have been very difficult and, as a relatively new Head Teacher, there are no training manuals to guide us through this. I am lucky to have a hard working team of staff who care passionately about children, with a supportive community of parents/carers who have been an asset throughout this period and a very hard working and proactive governing body.

I am looking forward to seeing all of our students back in September and I wish you all a safe and restful summer holiday.

Yours faithfully



J E Crowe
Principal



A L Tobin
Chair of Governors



Supporting Your Child Returning To School



Returning to school after the summer holiday always requires a bit of adjustment for students and their families. After a long school closure this adjustment is even more important. In order to support you in helping your child / children to return to school in September we have put together the following guide.

Routines

Routines are always important for all young people all the time! Plan ahead to re-establish normal routines. This is vital for a smooth return to school.

If your child has got out of normal sleep patterns then gradually **reintroduce these in the last two weeks of the holidays**. They need to have a **good few days before returning** of going to bed and getting up at the normal times on school days.

Get your **child eating breakfast and doing activities in the morning** if this is a habit they have got out of.

Talk with your child about the new school routines in September and how they are slightly different to normal.

School Work

Please keep a sense of perspective. Avoid using phrases like 'lost generation', 'damage to learning', 'catch up', 'falling behind' etc. These will only make students anxious. Be positive about the return to school.

If your child has kept up with their school work they will not need extra intervention. Teachers will be regularly revisiting the topics covered during the closure to consolidate and strengthen this learning.

Get your child to **look through the topics they have covered (see below)**. Teachers will be asking them questions on these when they return.

We have enough time in the curriculum to revisit prior learning and teach new content.

Key Messages for Year 11 and Year 13 Students 2020 / 2021

- We have enough time to cover the curriculum and ensure you understand the content covered during lockdown. You will not go into your exams with gaps in your knowledge.
- The exam boards are looking at remodelling the exams. This will mean they may be later next year and also may have more choice in them so not every topic is examined.
- Students' final grade depends on their score relative to everyone else taking that exam. Every student has had to learn remotely, therefore if they have done the work then they will not be at a disadvantage.
- If you have missed some learning, or your understanding of some topics isn't secure, teachers know this from Teams. Further help will be in place to support you but you must commit to working extra hard to be ready for your exams next year.

Further Support for Parents / Carers

- Curriculum overview to help students review the topics covered during closure. <https://www.whitburncofeacademy.org/school-life/curriculum/curriculum-overview.html>
- Mental Health Support: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- Contact the school via the office@whitburncofeacademy.org account to let us know if you have any concerns regarding helping your child get ready to return to school.