

16th July 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Arrangements for the start of the new academic year

Further to my letter last week, I am writing with more details about the new academic year and enclose some key documentation outlining a slightly revised temporary structure for the school day and some notes on how we will operate. I have also enclosed a copy of the government advice for parents that I mentioned in my previous letter. As I am sure you will understand there is rather a lot to think about and plan for, so my apologies that this also means there is a lot of detail for you to read and take in too.

Opening in September:

We have planned to open in accordance with the guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), which sets out clearly that schools must offer a full-time, broad and balanced curriculum for all students, whilst also putting in place stated 'systems of control' to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and react accordingly to any suspected or confirmed cases of it. There are many considerations in balancing these two factors and different schools will have unique challenges in doing so.

For our part, we have taken a great deal of time and care to ensure that your children will be safe and enjoy the full benefits of education here at John O'Gaunt School. The attached documents set out key information about the routines and procedures that students can expect from September onwards. Please do take the time to read these carefully along with the GOV.UK guidance. I am aware that people may interpret this guidance differently but please be assured that the approaches we have taken are in the best interests of our students and staff. No decisions have been taken lightly and we have risk assessed comprehensively.

Therefore, as per government guidance, **attendance at school is mandatory**¹ for all students from the beginning of the new academic year and the usual expectations will apply².

In terms of arrangements, please note the following:

- Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd September are Staff INSET Days and no students are expected into school
- **Thursday 3rd September Year 7 only** in school from 8.30am. Years 8-11 will be given remote learning tasks to complete at home. These will also be available from the school website. The school day finishes at 3.10pm and there is a Transition Evening for parents/carers of new Year 7 students 5-6pm. Separate details have been sent out about this event
- **Friday 4th September Year 7-11** in school from 8.30am. Years 8-11 will be asked to bring their remote learning work from the previous day with them. The school day finishes at 3.10pm
- All students are required to attend in **full uniform**
- Current government guidance does not require masks or face coverings to be worn in school

Transport

In line with DfE advice and in the interests of public health, we would encourage students to try and avoid travelling on public transport and to walk or cycle to school where possible. We are in communication with Local Authority representatives regarding school transport. I understand that the LAs intend to run these services as close to normal as possible, but we are still awaiting confirmation of this from them. Further details for all parents who use school transport will be sent out as soon as we have the information. Students will need to abide by the rules of the bus

¹ In a very small number of exceptional cases there may be students who are unable to attend following clinical and/or public health advice. Please see p4 of the attached DfE guidance for further details about government expectations

² This includes usual arrangements for reporting sickness absence and these arrangements will also include those reporting symptoms of COVID-19

company for travel, this may or may not include the need for face coverings or social distancing and further information will be made available on this as well. My apologies for the delay with this information; like us, our local authority colleagues are dealing with complex planning on a limited timescale.

Supporting your child if they have concerns:

I am sure that there will be some understandable anxiety among our community about coming to school in September, whether that is because you are one of our new Year 7 students or returning to us after lockdown. This is perfectly normal. Please be assured that we are aware of this and have already planned a range of approaches to support students pastorally in school. This includes formal provision in lessons as part of a 'recovery curriculum' (for example through Tutor time or PSHE lessons) and through additional support such as the Kooth online counselling service we will have access to from September.

Alternatively, there is a significant amount of help and support outside of school. The following websites may be a good place to start if you feel you or your child needs it:

- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/services/find-your-local-service>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Work over the summer holidays

I am aware that you may have concerns about work and content that has been missed during lockdown. Over recent weeks staff have spent time completing a tracking document to establish how well students have been engaging with remote learning and the quality of work that is being produced. This is to inform our planning for September and to ensure we can address any gaps in learning in future provision. Some teachers may choose to set groups or individual students work over the summer but we do of course want students to balance this with quality down-time. We do recommend that students spend a little time over the holidays going over work or revising content and there is nothing to stop students researching topics independently too. There continues to be online resources that may prove helpful in addition to the resources provided by us and two of the most popular are:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- <https://www.thenational.academy/>

Change to pathways system

I wanted to let you know that we have decided to move away from the KS3 pathways of 'Discover', 'Endeavour' and 'Aspire'. Having reviewed the evidence, we felt that an alternative approach would better prepare all students for the rigour of GCSE courses. Therefore, from September, we will be moving to a system of a top set and then parallel sets below, which means that the idea of a "lower" set disappears. The only exceptions to this are maths and science; these two subjects will operate a setting policy in order to respond to the Foundation and Higher tiers that exist at GCSE level. What has not changed is our drive to ensure that the quality of education for every child is of the highest standard in every class.

Finally, with all the operational details and public health information, it would be easy for you to think that we're not hugely excited to be able to welcome all our students back to school; this is certainly not the case and we are very much looking forward to seeing our students and welcome them looking smart and ready to learn from 3rd September!

In the meantime, if you have any queries about September please do not hesitate to contact the school at jogoffice@excalibur.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Hawthorne
Head of School

Enc – [Daily Routines – Sept 2020](#)
[What parents and carers need to know in the autumn term](#)