

Friday, 3rd July 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

**Looking to September.... Some early thinking on keeping our schools as safe as possible**

You will have heard the Government announcement that schools will be open for all pupils from September 2020.

As you know the BDAT Academies have been open to some groups of students since the Government announced lock down in March. In June we were pleased to be able to welcome further students back to school following Government advice. We approached this with great caution, reviewing all the scientific advice to ensure that we could be as safe as possible. This has gone extremely well, as our safety measures and risk assessments were excellent and our staff, our parents and our students have worked in partnership to keep school safe. Thank you to all those parents who sent your children back into school as requested – it has been lovely to see them.

We are delighted that we can now look forward to seeing all our wonderful pupils back in school next term. As you would imagine, we will be very busy in the next couple of weeks planning, completing new and detailed risk assessments, and working out exactly what school will look like and feel like when your child returns. Schools will be closed over the summer to students giving staff both a well-deserved break and allowing for further planning refinements to take place.

In the guidance published yesterday the Government has stated: *'Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19).'*

We're working hard to consider how we group pupils together, ensure that we reduce contact between different groups of pupils, and keep the stringent cleaning and disinfecting processes we already have in place to ensure that our academies are as safe as can be for your child.

**Your child's school will send out further detail before your school opens, but in the meantime, there are some key points that you need to be aware of when thinking about and discussing with your child in advance of next term. By agreeing common principles and expectations, together we can all help our schools stay as safe as possible as we open our doors to all students.**

1. You must ensure that if anyone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms, your child does NOT attend school. Any child or staff member who develops symptoms in the school day will be sent home immediately. You must follow the Government guidance 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'  
If anyone in your household is displaying any symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive, you MUST inform your school.
2. Your child will be expected to follow strict behaviour rules relating to physical contact with other pupils and keeping their hands clean. This is to protect your child, their peers and the staff in the school. Pupils will be expected to/taken to wash their hands regularly, and use hand sanitiser. This will be provided by school, although you are of course welcome to send your child to school with their own hygiene equipment if you prefer.
3. Pupils and staff will not be wearing face coverings in school. The Government advice is quite clear that this is not necessary. If a face covering is used on public transport to get to school, it should be removed on arrival.
4. If your child has Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) your child's school will have been in touch with you regularly over the last few months, and will contact you to explain what provision will look like from September.
5. Secondary: It will be more important than ever that your child has their own equipment in school to ensure that this does not need to be shared.
6. The Government has advised walking or cycling to school wherever possible to reduce the use of public transport.
7. Attendance at school. The government has relaxed the rules on attendance during lockdown. However, this will change in September and attendance will become mandatory again. The Government guidance says:

*'Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:*

- *parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age;*
- *schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;*
- *the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.'*

8. If your child falls into an extremely clinically vulnerable category or remains under the care of a specialist health care professional, you should discuss their care before returning to school in September and talk to your school about the situation. Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, they will not be penalised.
9. School kitchens will re-open in September, and lunches will be available again. Pupils eligible for free school meals will return to having their lunch at school and will no longer receive lunch vouchers. This is in line with the Government scheme and what is being provided nationally for all students.
10. Pupils will be expected to wear school uniform again from September. The guidance states that this does not need washing more frequently or any differently to what you would have done prior to Covid 19.
11. The curriculum that we offer our pupils will remain broad and balanced, and will continue to include music, arts and sport - as usual. We look forward to getting back to near normal in September.

We understand that some of you and your children will be anxious about returning in September, after some months out of school. Please be reassured that we are taking exceptional measures to make our schools as safe as can be. Your school will be providing additional emotional and wellbeing support for any pupils that need it and will also be providing additional opportunities to support learning where this is required. Although it feels like this situation has lasted forever, in fact most pupils have lost, at worst, only 62 school days of face-to-face learning to date and very many of them have worked hard using online resources or work-books provided by our hardworking and dedicated teachers. Together we will work together in September to move forward to make sure your child gets the great and safe education they deserve.

With very best wishes



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