



27 August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your family are safe and well and you have had the chance to have some kind of break over the summer. It seems that with exam results, full reopening of schools and fast changing guidance, education is rarely out of the news at the moment. I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on our preparations and protocols for September and explain in a little more detail what your child can expect on their return to school.

We know that the beginning of a new term can often bring with it a mixture of nerves - and excitement - and this may well have been amplified because of the current situation. This is to be expected and we want to reassure you and our students of the measures we have taken and protocols we will all be following to keep the school community as safe as possible. Our planning for a full September opening is based on the government's latest guidance alongside that provided by Hertfordshire County Council. In addition, it has been adapted to reflect the unique setting of Ashlyns School.

September protocols and key information attached

In my end of term message in the final T-Bulletin, I provided links to our Risk Assessment for September and our 'At a Glance Guide'. Both of these documents have been revised and updated in light of ongoing guidance. In addition to the 'At a Glance Guide', we have also produced a set of 'Student Protocols' which provide more detail on the routines and expectations we will have in place to help ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors.

These protocols cover:

- School uniform and equipment
- Safe travel to and from school and arrival/ dismissal procedures
- Safe movement around the school building
- Safe classroom practices
- Enhanced hygiene practices
- Break and lunchtime arrangements
- Expectations of parents regarding access to school site
- Arrangements should there be a suspected Covid case

We appreciate there is a lot to take in and have made arrangements to explain these to all students on their first day back to reassure them, to ensure they are fully aware of the expectations we all need to follow and so that any queries they may have can be addressed. However, we would be grateful if you could also review the 'At a Glance' and 'Student Protocols' documents with your child in advance of the start of term and emphasise the importance of following this guidance to help keep everyone safe.

Please find attached a copy of each of these documents:

- Updated 'At a Glance Guide' for parents
- Revised Student Protocols for Sept 2020 return
- Updated Risk Assessment (RA-005)

Facemasks

You are likely to be aware that the government's position on facemasks in educational settings has recently been updated. When 'local lockdowns' occur, staff and students will be required to wear facemasks when moving around the school and in communal areas. At all other times there is currently no requirement that students have to wear a mask. However, we understand that some students might wish to wear one, particularly when traveling between lessons. Further information can be found in the student protocols document attached.

Curriculum Provision

Whilst the practical adjustments which students will experience are wide ranging, it is very much my ambition for students' experience in the classroom to feel as normal as possible with a return to a focus on learning. Under the provisions of the full September reopening plan, students will have access to the full range of curriculum subjects in specialist teaching spaces/classrooms; however, there will be a range of measures and mitigations in place to accommodate safe working practices such as:

- One way system/longer movement time
- Enhanced cleaning stations and protocols
- Reconfiguration of classrooms
- Adapted practices in practical subjects such as PE
- Longer lead-time to enable students to arrive and move to tutor rooms in the morning
- Revised canteen arrangements and packed lunches

There has also been a good deal of media coverage about 'catch up', 2021 exams and financial support for schools to facilitate this. Despite the positive engagement of students during lockdown, we fully expect there to be some areas where students may need additional support. Our staff have been working hard over the past few months to plan for a full return and will use their expertise over time to identify any additional support required and ways to facilitate this. The most important thing is for students to be back in the classroom, working hard, enjoying learning and, over time, demonstrating what they can do and what they need a little more guidance on.

For new Year 11 and 13 students, the revised arrangements for 2021 examinations were published by Ofqual in August, although we are still awaiting information on the examination 'window.' The exam boards have been reviewing the guidance and we expect more details to follow in the Autumn term. As soon as we have more information, we will share this with you. However, the planning for September has taken account of where there are potential changes across different subjects.

Contingency Planning

I recognise that the situation (and guidance) continues to evolve and we will continue to review our arrangements as part of our ongoing strategy. Contingency planning is underway to ensure we are able to respond to advice which might be provided at a local level.

Start of term arrangements

As a reminder, we are expecting Year 7 and Year 12 only on Friday 4 September (arriving from 8.20 for an 8.35 start) with all year groups attending on Monday 7 September (arriving from 8.20 for an 8.35 start.).

Staff will be on duty at the front gates to direct and guide students safely to the appropriate rooms.

Parent information evenings and events

Normally in my start of the new academic year letters, I indicate upcoming events and say how much we are looking forward to meeting you all again. So much has changed as a result of the pandemic but our commitment to keeping you informed and involved has not. However, please note that all parent information evenings, consultation events, open evening and awards ceremonies will be scheduled virtually until further notice. We will contact you with key details over the course of the term.

Our commitment and partnership working

Your child will naturally notice lots of changes in the school - as in our everyday lives currently. What hasn't changed is the staff commitment to supporting and helping them and we are all excited to be welcoming them all back on site.

Finally, I'd like to thank you for your continuing support. It is important as we move into this new phase that we continue to work together to ensure we build children's confidence as they return to school and I look forward to ensuring, with your help, that the new term starts as successfully and positively as possible.

Yours sincerley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Shapland'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'S'.

James Shapland
Headteacher