

28 August 2020

Dear Parents

It is with great delight that we shall be welcoming students to Knole Academy at the start of the September Term. Year 7 and 12 will be arriving on Tuesday 1 September with all other year groups arriving on Wednesday 2 September. Students should ensure that they bring appropriate equipment as after a brief period with form tutors, they will be in timetabled lessons.

On arrival students should go immediately to their designated zone, senior staff will be at the front of the school to direct students. These zones are to support the utilisation of year group bubbles to reduce the risk of Covid 19 transmission. We have risk assessments regarding Covid 19 available on the website under "Information."

Face masks

There has been significant coverage in the news regarding the use of face masks in school. The guidance from the government can be found on this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>

The guidance stipulates that face masks are not needed in schools unless we are placed into a local intervention area because of an increase in Covid 19 case s:

"In these intervention areas, in education settings where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors) and pupils when moving around indoors, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain."

However, I do recognise that some parents, students and staff will be nervous around the return to school, therefore, we shall allow masks to be worn in transition between lessons. This is not a recommendation, and will not be an expectation, but an allowance to ensure that students and staff feel comfortable in the working environment.

We will not be permitting students to wear face masks in classrooms unless, like Hair and Beauty, it is part of the subject risk assessment. Even in local intervention areas where the incidence of Covid 19 is high the guidance from government is clear:

"Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided."

If students do choose to wear masks between lessons, they should have a clean plastic bag to store the mask in between uses.

Buses

Obviously, we have limited control over bus services but a reasonable precis of the arrangements was presented by Tom Tugendhat in response to an enquiry by one of the Deputy Headteachers at Knole Academy:

“First, KCC and bus operators will convert some existing bus routes into dedicated school services. This means that they do not require as strict social distancing, as they are all carrying school children only, under the Government guidance. However only front facing seats will be used and standing will be strongly discouraged – meaning capacity will be around 70% of normal. Other bus services which are still available for public use will have social distancing, which caps capacity at around 50% for most vehicles.

Face coverings will be mandatory on all buses for anyone over the age of 11, so please make sure your child has one on, or they will not be allowed on the bus – unless they have a medical exemption.

Though the Kent Travel Saver application window closed on 9 August for the start of term, there is the option to buy a pass during the year when you feel comfortable putting your child on the bus - you can find more information [here](#). At present KCC have significantly fewer applications compared with this time last year, so there still should be some capacity available where additional buses are running.

KCC have also looked at making some dedicated school services as ‘bubbles’ or year groups, for example. However, this wouldn’t work in practice. As an example in south Tonbridge many of the bus services carry students from Hayesbrook, Judd, Tonbridge Grammar, Weald of Kent and Hillview, so despite the Government investment there still wouldn’t be anywhere near enough buses to serve each year in each of these schools, from every village the bus comes from.

Finally, KCC have assured me they will put in as much capacity as possible from the start of next week, and have made it clear to bus operators that buses must not exceed capacity, and they will fund extra if necessary.”

*Tom Tugendhat MP
Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling*

Once again, may I insist that if parents are dropping off and collecting students by car they complete this process at a reasonable distance away from the Academy site, it will be in everyone’s best interest to avoid the congestion around Bradbourne Vale Road and the A25.

Finally...

I would like to congratulate all of the Year 11 and 13 students on their examination results, eventually they received the grades they deserved. In all cases those grades were predicated against the hard work they put into their studies and their performance in mock examinations. As we enter another uncertain year, may I reinforce the need for all students to utilise their best endeavours from September, take all examinations seriously and revise thoroughly, the “mock” exams may end up having far greater significance than they were intended for. I am confident that the staff at Knole

will be able to mitigate against the learning loss that has occurred since March but it will require the full commitment of the students.

Best wishes



Mr D Collins
Headteacher