

2 July 2020

Dear Parents

In the recent news you will have seen proposals for the full return for pupils in September. I want to start by stating that I fully support this aim. We want all students back at Knole Academy.

The reports on reopening that have appeared in the Huffington Post since Tuesday and mainline media today have been misleading, the full guidance can be found on the link below that was released today by the government.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

I want to draw your attention to one part of the guidance:

“Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not ‘all-or-nothing’ options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep children in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport, or for boarding pupils in one group residentially and another during the school day. Siblings may also be in different groups. Endeavouring to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between children will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.”

I need to draw your attention to this because there is no way that Knole Academy can be open for all students and meet all of the publicised conditions. When 80% of our students arrive via public transport and school buses, phased starts are impractical as we would have different year groups arriving on the same transport and some students having to wait before coming onto site. Equally we have two food tech rooms, four art rooms, two design technology rooms and these are used by all year groups, the subjects cannot be taught well in non-specialist provision. In our incoming Year 7, we have 96 students who have siblings in other year groups, all year groups have similar numbers of siblings. Therefore, even if we were able to keep year groups completely apart, there would still be significant contact between pupils of different ages.

What I want to do is inform you of the controls that we intend to implement to allow for a September start for all students:

- We intend to operate a normal school day for all students.
- We are identifying year group based spaces for non-contact time such as break and lunch to prevent mixing between year groups.
- All year groups will have a designated dining space and time to prevent year group mixing. We have had to remove provision of plate based main meals and move to food that can be eaten on the move.

- There will be no food provision at break or before school, we are not able to separate the students and complete service in the short time scale.
- We are removing large scale gatherings such as assemblies from the curriculum, we have invested in a broadcast system so assemblies can be delivered into form rooms.
- Extra-curricular clubs that involve multiple year groups will be suspended, such as school choir, we still intend to offer clubs but within year groups.
- We have removed all water fountains from the school site and replaced them with bottle fill fountains which operate without the need to physically touch the machine.
- We shall be cleaning classrooms between lessons, wiping down desks, laptops etc, we shall not be lending equipment. We are investing in more visualisers so that text books can be displayed on screen and will need reduced usage from students.
- We shall be introducing arrangements for behaviour in the corridors with some movement restrictions to avoid congested areas.
- We shall be encouraging the need for regular hand washing and social distancing.

This is not an exhaustive list but hopefully provides some assurance of the steps the academy is taking.

We were in contact with Go coach yesterday about any changes to plans for school transport. At present, they have received no guidance and it is interesting that the government is passing legislation to remove the statutory responsibility for Local Authorities to provide transport. This means that there may be greater emphasis on parents to ensure transport to school.

I know one of the headlines from the press releases is the reinstatement of fines for non-attendance. I would like to stress that my position on this has not changed. I want every student to attend school, but I also recognise that there are individual circumstances which make attendance dangerous to students and their immediate families. If parents inform me that this is the case we shall not issue penalty notices. However, we will not be able to offer the remote learning opportunities that have been on offer since March as all staff will now be fulfilling full time face to face teaching duties.

I would like to ask parents to avoid wherever possible, requesting student absence for holidays during the next academic year. I know a large number of holiday plans have been disrupted, but please consider the continued disruption to normal patterns. These requests will not be recorded as authorised absence.

I want to finish by stating that there has been a lot of coverage regarding the impact of missed education, with headlines such as the “lost generation” and long term damage to learning. I find these headlines unhelpful and inaccurate. I would have preferred students to have been in school for the last four months but I am confident that we can mitigate against the loss. It is worth remembering that we start education at 4 and most students continue until they are 18, the lost learning is not going to leave massive voids in knowledge. The Year 10 students, who have already been attending, have retained the vast majority of knowledge and we shall provide a structure for all students to cover the work they have missed. If students have engaged with online learning they will have covered a significant amount of material. The biggest loss is the lack of a routine, students will have missed their

friends and the lack of enriching experiences such as trips and extra-curricular clubs. I hope that in the wider lifting of restrictions, students will be able to see their friends and we shall be able to offer enrichment opportunities on their return.

One assistance I ask from parents is to try to ensure that pupil have a sensible sleep schedule before their return to school, it will be exhausting for everyone to return to "normality" but it will be nice to return to such a state.

Wishing everyone the best of health.



David Collins
Headteacher