

21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to provide some more important information about the return to school for all students in September. I have provided some detail below around how things necessarily have to change when the academy re-opens. However, given the pace and regularity of changes in guidance provided by the DfE, there is a chance that some of what we are currently proposing to do will need to be adapted to comply with the most recent requirements.

### Uniform

Students will be expected to attend school in full, standard uniform, as per the published uniform policy. Changing facilities will be made available (and regularly cleaned) for those students who have PE. This approach has changed following updates to government guidance.

If students opt to wear a mask or face covering, this must be plain – no logos or images are permitted. Masks are not mandatory at this stage, although government advice may change in the coming weeks. Should this be the case, you will be informed as soon as possible.

### Arrival at school and times of the day

Each year group has a different start time and a different entrance to the site and the building. We politely ask that students stick, wherever possible, to these start times, to prevent overcrowding on the way into the site. We also encourage parents to refrain from entering the site, including on foot, unless a specific meeting has been arranged with a member of staff.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to hold breakfast club before school in the first few weeks. As soon as we are able to do this safely, we will communicate with students and parents.

We are hoping to be able to provide a snack for those students who become hungry during the longer morning session, and we will review arrangements as the term progresses. Where possible, please send your child with a snack if you think they will need something to eat during the morning session and enough to drink as the water fountains will be out of use.

### Week 1 (week beginning 31<sup>st</sup> Aug)

Year 7: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September: 8.20am to 2.40pm. Arrive at the front of school and gather in the Amphitheatre.

Year 11: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September: 1pm to 2.40pm. Arrive at the front of school and gather in the Amphitheatre.

### From week 2 (week beginning 7<sup>th</sup> September) onwards:

Year 7: Arrive 8.35am, enter through PE entrance at the back of the school. Leave 3.05pm

Year 8: Arrive 8.25am, enter through the DT doors near the Pitt Street entrance. Leave at 2.50pm

Year 9: Arrive at 8.15, enter through the science fire exit near B004. Leave at 2.40pm.

Year 10: Arrive at 8.25am, enter through the main entrance by reception. Leave at 2.50pm.

Year 11: Arrive at 8.15am, enter through the science fire exit near the outside servery. Leave at 3.40pm. Year 11 will finish at 2.40pm on a Friday.

Staff will be at entrances on each day to guide pupils to the correct entrance zones if they do not know the way.

### Zoning arrangements

On entering the building at their specific entry point, students are required to head straight for their learning zone. At Key Stage 3, students are housed in year groups in specific parts of the building. In most cases, students will be grouped in forms and taught in the same classroom for the whole day. There will be a small number of exceptions to this, for example PE lessons which will, weather permitting, take place outside the building and not involve excessive use of equipment. At Key Stage 4, there will be some movement around classrooms to make use of specialist classrooms, especially important for options subjects (practical science, design, art, music, etc). We hope to re-introduce practical specialist teaching in Key Stage 3 once we have gauged how the revised arrangements are progressing.

### Break-time

Students will take a reduced break-time of 15 minutes in their zone, supervised by academy pastoral staff. They will be allowed to remain in their teaching space during this break. There can be no canteen food service at break-time because of the need to ensure Year Groups are not mixing, and the regulations around appropriate distancing.

### Lunchtime

Lunchtime will be a 25-minute slot, a single year group at a time. This will be available in the canteen, although we are encouraging students who are able to do so to bring a packed lunch to minimise queuing in the Heart Space. This is a major change to the normal way of working, and we will need to review this arrangement over the first couple of weeks to see whether we can improve what is on offer.

### Equipment

The government guidance recommends that students do not share equipment, to prevent as much as possible the risk of infection. We are therefore asking that, where possible, all students come to school equipped with a pen, pencil, ruler and rubber. If equipment has to be borrowed, it will either need to be cleaned before and after use, or kept by the student.

### Keeping safe and clean

Each zone will have its own suite of toilets and hand-washing facilities, to be used only by students from the relevant bubble. Sanitiser will be placed in every room and this must be used on entry and re-entry. To avoid students queuing for toilets, we will allow students, within reason, to stagger their visits. This arrangement will be reviewed when restrictions are eased, as we do not wish to disrupt learning in the long-term.

Hand-washing will need to be done properly, with soap, and for at least 20 seconds. If your son / daughter needs to “refresh” how to wash their hands effectively, we would urge you to

ensure they are in the habit before returning to school. We will be providing some initial support in the first session back to ensure everyone knows how to do what they can to remain hygienic in school.

### Public transport

The regulations currently state that anyone travelling on public transport must wear a mask. If a student arriving on public transport has not adhered to this requirement, we will contact you to inform you and then make decisions on whether they are to remain in school or to return home. In any case, we will contact you to discuss before making any decision.

Some students travel on a dedicated school bus. The company has informed us that there is slightly reduced capacity for this service. Where possible, in the initial period, we are asking parents to consider whether there are other methods of travel to school available and, if there are, to make such arrangements accordingly. We are encouraging as many students as possible to walk or cycle to school if this is a viable option.

### Work opportunities

We will continue to provide home learning electronically going forward to minimise the risk of infection. In class, we will be doing everything we can to bolster learning which, whilst not an easy task, will be made easier if all students attend school.

We will be adapting our approach to disruptive students from September, and for as long as restrictions are in place, so that any disruption has as little impact on the rest of the class as possible. Each zone of the academy will have its own removal room, although we hope these will not be required often. It is my genuine hope that students who have previously shown significant disruption will acknowledge the value of being in education full-time after significant time out of school, and that they grasp this opportunity to hit the “re-set” button. Whilst my personal ethos is one of total inclusion and equal opportunity, I will not be allowing persistently disruptive students to de-rail the academy’s efforts to bring about sustained and significant improvement. I would be very grateful if you would impress upon your child the need for them to comply with academy rules and regulations and support staff and other students to get on with their learning efficiently.

### What will happen if there is a reported COVID-19 infection

I have attached to this letter the latest government advice about what should be done in the event of a confirmed infection. I would urge that you read this carefully, so you are aware of your responsibilities should your child or anyone else in your household present symptoms of COVID-19. We will be tracking very carefully all students, staff and visitors, so we can communicate effectively with everyone if this happens.

Otherwise, the government has confirmed that attendance at school is mandatory for all students unless there are special circumstances. I hope I can count on your support to ensure your child attends school every day, to catch up as quickly as possible on every lost learning opportunity.

### Mental health and anxiety support

The return to school will inevitably be a time of great stress and anxiety for many students, parents and staff members. As we all adjust to this new way of working, issues will arise. We hope to be able to react quickly when this is the case, and we want to work in partnership with parents and students to get things right for everyone.

Academy staff will be on hand whenever possible to address the needs of students who are struggling with the return, but if you have any emerging concerns over the first few weeks, you are encouraged to contact the pastoral team for support.

And finally

For parents of students returning to Netherwood, I totally understand your anxiety around closing any gaps that may exist due to absence from school. I have two daughters going into Year 9 and 11, and they have missed their friends, their teachers and the feeling of belonging which being part of a community brings. My eldest daughter is petrified, despite working hard during lockdown, that she will not be as prepared as she could be for her GCSEs next summer. Both of them have also forgotten what it is like to be in school, with its routines and expectations.

We have planned for this and I am confident we will identify issues and correct them quickly – it is what we do. We will have assessments in Maths and English and will assess reading levels to ensure that all pupils are back in the swing of things as quickly as possible.

I will finish by thanking everyone for their resilience and patience during this most troubling of times. Whilst there is much uncertainty yet to fall on us all, I hope we have provided some assurance that the academy and its leaders have done everything possible to get things back up and running safely and effectively.

Enjoy your last few days of the holiday.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonny Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

**Jonny Mitchell**  
**Principal Designate**