



7 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Arrangements for the End of the Autumn Term and Start of the Spring Term 2020

I hope this letter finds you and yours well. I am writing to confirm the details for the end of this term and the arrangements for the beginning of the next academic year in January and also to thank you for all your support in what has been a testing term for us all.

Arrangements for the Last Day of Term: No early Dismissal on Friday 18 December

Sadly, due to the need to ensure we maximise learning time for students in view of the perceived 'lost time' in school due to the previous lockdown, we have decided that we will not continue our Christmas tradition of early dismissal on the last day of the Autumn Term (Friday 18 December) this year. We have also listened to those parents and members of our community who have raised concerns about students mixing in the town when they have left the school site and we feel that early closure could only further encourage this. The early closure previously published on our website and in Student Handbooks will thus not happen. We will finish with a staggered dismissal from tutor time on the last day as follows:

Year Group	Time	Exit Area
Sixth Form	15.00	Bottom gate
Year 11	15.05	Bottom gate
Year 9	15.05	Top gate
Year 10	15.10	Bottom gate
Year 8	15.10	Top gate
Year 7	15.15	Annexe gate

All student transport providers have therefore been advised that students will be picked up at normal time. This also applies to our own minibus service.

Christmas Lunch

Again, very sadly, due to the restrictions on the mixing of bubbles, this year we cannot offer traditional Christmas lunch to all year groups in the Dining Hall. Instead, our caterers have offered students the chance to be delivered a Christmas lunch on a bubble rota in their forms to ensure it is COVID safe. There has been a varied take up by year groups for this, with only enough take up by Year 7, Year 8 to make it viable. For Year 7 this will happen on Thursday 17 December and for Year 8 on Friday 18 December. The cost of the Christmas lunch will be £2.00 and is subsidised by the school. For parents of Year 7 and Year 8 students, please ensure that you have paid on Wise Pay by the end of the day on Monday 14 December if your child is involved.

As part of our Christmas fundraising this year, we intend to support the National Save the Children 'Christmas Jumper Day' on our last day of term. The idea is to get everyone to wear a festive jumper or festive colours along with non-uniform.

In order to gain the privilege of non-uniform, students will need to donate £1.00 to the collection for the charity between Wednesday 9 and Thursday 17 December during form time otherwise they will need to attend in normal uniform on Friday 18 December. All donations will support the aims of the charity which brings essentials like healthcare, education, protection and food to the millions of children around the world who are missing out on the most basic support.

Reflecting on this past term, I have been more than pleased with how students and staff have responded to the new COVID prevention measures we had to put in place from September.

I am sure you will be aware that the Government have always stated their intention to keep schools open as far as possible. From the start of September, we have received continually updated guidance for this to happen. In working through the guidance, as you know, we have made substantial changes to how the Academy operates in order to ensure students and staff can be in an environment which is as safe as possible. We obviously cannot eliminate the risk of the virus arriving in school but the measures we have put in place have been to make the risk of spread as low as possible. We have also ensured that we have kept to our desired curriculum in order that we provide a broad and balanced education for all students and so that we also honour the choices that students have previously made for their GCSEs and A Levels.

Throughout we have stuck to their basic principles required by Government:

- An absolute reliance on good hygiene, which students and staff have realised is paramount and it has become habitual for most of us. We must however, not become complacent and will thus continue to remind everyone of this in the New Year.
- A focus on calm orderly movement. Our students are very able to self-regulate but have required constant reminding of this. I think it is fair to say that all children have found the need to maintain social distancing as the most difficult requirement.
- The use of 'zoning'. Years 7 to 11 have been zoned into separate buildings for their lessons, in six 'micro-schools within a school'. We have thus achieved the need to minimise contacts with students from other year groups and this has caused a different dynamic, particularly for the younger students who have not had the benefit of role modelling from the older students. I feel this has also been a shame for older students, particularly Prefects, who have not had the chance to support and mentor the younger students.

You will know that we have had a few confirmed positive cases in our community and in dealing with these we have had to be guided by the authorities. Public Health England have thus advised us in determining if a class or year group closure is required. They adopt a risk assessment approach and so do not always jump to close a bubble (year group) as we originally had assumed and as we have seen in our cases. We have been continually told that schools that have taken the most steps to minimise the spread of the virus, have been 'less affected' by the necessity for whole school closure.

We recently did have a comprehensive evaluation of our measures by Public Health England who were very satisfied with the mitigations we have put in place to prevent the spread of the virus and to keep staff and students safe. We are not complacent though and will constantly strive to improve our provision in line with our core value of 'continuous improvement' and so to that end, please do keep suggestions for improvement coming in and we will listen.

Bridging Gaps in Knowledge

In recognising that students experienced very different lockdown periods, staff have been working hard with students to assess where the gaps in their knowledge are. This is a process that will take time and happen largely within the normal classroom routines where teachers are redeveloping their intended curriculums to ensure a bridge for any gaps in knowledge caused by the lockdown. For some students, however, additional bespoke support will be required and we will contact you individually where this is the case.

Clearly **Year 11 and Year 13** have important exams at the end of the next academic year. Current information shows that we are expecting the exam season to be moved back by three weeks, which does provide additional teaching time. We have also, as you know, organised **a Period 6 for all Year 11 and Year 13 students** in order to support them further in bridging any gaps in their knowledge and allowing them the best chance to flourish.

This additional time, providing high-quality learning and revision with their teachers, will support all students and particularly those that found difficulties in committing to remote learning. We will continue this next year because even though we started it early (second school week in September), an extra one hour per week for each subject has gone nowhere near the time lost from lessons in lockdown, particularly for core subjects.

The Student Role

We are fortunate to have students that on the whole are mature, intelligent, sensible and naturally look after all other members of the community. In January 2021, we will continue to ask and expect all students to play their own major role in community safety. Students will need to continue to follow the prevention rules carefully, self-regulate their behaviour and work with staff to continue to create a safe, calm, happy and purposeful environment.

Buildings Masterplan: Phase One 'Reception Building'

Despite the completion of the building being delayed by lockdown, we were very excited to have the new Reception Building handed over to us during at the end of the summer holiday period. It is slightly unfortunate however that this coincided with the need to place students in year group bubbles and so, because we had to use the building as a Year 9 zone, most of the other students have not been able to benefit from the new Drama Studio, new Art Rooms or visit the new Student Support facilities and Student Reception. The building completes Phase One of the four phases of the Buildings Masterplan and we are already planning for Phase Two (Sport Village/Community facilities) and Phase Three (new Sixth Form Centre).

Many thanks for all your many messages of support and praise for how we have handled the threat of this epidemic and kept the school open. It has obviously taken much thought and deliberation so it is gratifying to hear praise and thanks from parents and carers.

I must also thank and pay tribute to all our staff. Teachers and support staff alike have been admirably pragmatic, determined and committed, putting their own anxieties aside to keep a calm and safe environment here. Everything we have asked them to do they have done with full commitment and positivity. I must also publicly give particular thanks to my Leadership Team who have all taken such little time off since March and led from the front to make sure we have made the very best of the situation. As I have said many times, I have been in Education over 30 years and I know that you are very blessed to have such a fantastic body of caring staff to educate and care for your children. They truly have been marvellous. I have told them all to make sure they do not do any schoolwork over the forthcoming holidays – they have all deserved the time off and need to get a break and a proper rest.

Start of the Spring Term 2021 Arrangements

The first day back for students is **Tuesday 5 January 2021**. This is a normal school day so all students should arrive at the usual time of 08.40. For your information, this will be a Week A.

Even though we celebrate the news of a vaccine becoming available, we will obviously need to continue to operate our COVID Prevention Measures in school. Students will continue in their bubbles and we will still operate the expectations of Hands, Space and Face in order to ensure we continue to keep the risk of spread of the virus as low as possible

Academy Uniform

Expectations for Uniform will be the same as this term, with students being allowed to wear their PE kit on PE days. We will still need to ventilate classrooms and keep doors open so please ensure that your child is wearing layers under their uniform shirt to counteract this during the cold months.

Students Being 'Prepared for Learning'

Please ensure that their child is fully equipped for the return to school in January and refer to the basic stationery kit list. Please remember that it is essential for students to bring a reading book and also a pocket-sized dictionary.

Group Call Xpressions

Almost all parental communication is delivered electronically by our app-based provision called 'Group Call Xpressions'. Please continue to ensure that we have your correct mobile number and email address for our Academy database. This is especially important if you change your mobile telephone number. Should you have any difficulties with using this app then please contact our IT Team at ict@attleboroughacademy.org

During the forthcoming school holiday I would ask that you please follow all the national guidance, I have included some helpful bullet points and web addresses below. It is by everyone taking individual responsibility to follow this guidance, that we can together manage a safe and secure return to education in the new year.

- If your child is unable to start the new term because of COVID-19 or any other illness please let us know in the normal way by telephoning 01953 450340 or by emailing absence@attleboroughacademy.org. School reopens on Tuesday 5 January 2021.
- If your child lives in the same household as someone with coronavirus, your child must stay at home for **14 days** from the first day the person with coronavirus had symptoms or had their test.
- If your child develops [Symptoms of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) they should remain at home for at least **10 days** from the date when their symptoms appeared (or from the date they received a positive test result).
- [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) has information for households with possible coronavirus infection including easy to read guides in a number of languages.
- [Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection who do not live with the person - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) has information for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus infection including an easy to read guide.
- If your family is need of support to help you through a period of isolation, please see the [Norfolk Assistance Scheme](#) • www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk
- Some residents are also entitled to a self-isolation support payment of £500. To help someone apply for this, or to find out more please click [here](#)
- Please remember; there are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other; 1. Wash hands, 2. Cover face, 3. Make space!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year celebrations with your families. We will look forward to welcoming the students back in January 2021 and we look forward to brighter times in 2021!

Best wishes to you all.

Kind regards



Neil McShane
Executive Principal