

9th July 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Government update - Full opening of schools in September 2020

You will all have heard the government announcement last Thursday regarding the full opening of schools in September 2020. You can find the published guidance by the following link below:

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

Since mid-June, our school has been welcoming students back in Years 10 and Year 12. We approached this with great caution, reviewing all the scientific and public health advice to ensure that we could be as safe as possible. This has gone extremely well; our safety and risk assessments are sound, and those students who have returned adapted amazingly well to the new requirements. Safety measures and risk assessments are important, but they wouldn't have been successful if our students hadn't adhered to them. Thank you to all those parents/carers who sent their children back into school, it has been lovely to see them.

I am sure you will agree it is a relief for all that we are going to be able to welcome our students back to school and we are excited at the prospect of re-establishing some normality. In terms of the guidance that has been published, there is a wide range of parameters which direct schools to make judgements about how to balance and minimise the ongoing risks of COVID-19 while providing a full educational experience for all students. The guidance also identifies the necessity to plan for continued remote learning in the event of localised outbreaks so that we can maintain educational provision. We now need to spend time and commit careful consideration so that we can implement the guidance and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who work and learn at Phoenix.

I assure you that we will be working on this area as a priority, together with colleagues at other Sandwell schools, and we will communicate with you in due course, once our own strategic and operational plans are in place so as to support our students coming back into school.

Inevitably there will be many questions and I would ask for your patience and to hold these questions for now until we produce our own response to this guidance; this will give you all the detail that you need about your son/daughter's safe return to school in September.

There are a number of things that I need to bring to your attention at this point.

1. **All** students are expected to return to school. However, you will need to minimise contact between individuals who are unwell; therefore, you must ensure that if anyone in your household has Covid-19 symptoms, your child does **NOT** attend school. Any child or staff member who develops symptoms in the school day will be sent home immediately and should seek to get tested so that the national test and trace system can do its vital job.

You must follow the government guidance 'stay at home: guidance with households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (covid-19) infection'

If anyone in your household, or your child, tests positive for Covid-19 you must inform the school immediately.

2. Your child will be expected to follow strict behaviour rules relating to physical contact with other students and keeping their hands clean. Students will be expected to wash their hands regularly and to use hand sanitiser.
3. Students will not be wearing face coverings in school. The government is quite clear that this is not necessary. If students travel to school on public transport, their face coverings must be removed and appropriately discarded on arrival.
4. If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, our school staff will have been in touch with you regularly over the last few months, and will contact you to explain what provision will look like from September.
5. It will be more important than ever that your child has access to **their own** equipment in school to ensure that this does not need to be shared. Therefore please ensure that your child has the following on them: pens (including a green pen), pencil, ruler, eraser, calculator (the Casio FX-83GTX which the school uses), a glue stick and their planner. Note the planner is an essential communication tool between school and home.
6. The government has advised walking or cycling to school wherever possible to reduce the use of public transport.
7. Attendance – The government relaxed the rules on attendance during lockdown. However, this will change in September. The government guidance says:
'Missing out on more time in the classroom risks students falling further behind. Those with a higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from beginning of the autumn term. This means that from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply.'
8. The school kitchen will re-open in September and lunches will be available again (a simplified menu will be on offer to minimise waiting time). Students eligible for free school meals will return to having the lunch at school and will no longer receive lunch vouchers.
9. Students will be expected to wear full school uniform again from September.
10. The curriculum that we offer our students will remain broad and balanced, and will continue to include music, arts and sport.

Alongside all of the above, there is a high possibility that the timings of the school day will need to change for a period of time on our return in September with the probability that students start and end times will be staggered. Once again, once our plans are finalised for this, I will share them with you all.

To ensure that students are fully briefed on safe processes on our return in September, we will begin a phased return to school from **Thursday 3rd September 2020**. This will mean that not every year group will be in on that day, this is to ensure that we guarantee safe protocols to protect both your child and our staff.

As with the transition processes for Year 6 joining us in September, there will be some videos developed to help take you through the process. These will be available on our school's website in mid-August.

Equally, Ofqual have released information on examinations and how students will be tested and what aspects of the course syllabus can and cannot be delivered at this time. This does differ across subjects and we will write to you in due course to summarise the information.

We understand that some of you and your children will be anxious about returning in September, after some months out of the school environment. Please be assured that we are taking exceptional measures to make our school as safe as it can be. We will be providing additional emotional and wellbeing support for any students that need it and will also be providing additional opportunities to support learning where this is required. Although it feels like this situation has lasted forever, in fact students will have lost, at worst, 74 school days of learning. However we are very pleased that many of them have worked hard using the online resources or work packs provided by our hardworking and dedicated teachers. We are all determined that they will absolutely not be 'a lost generation' and we are adapting our curriculum to make sure that they get the learning and knowledge that they need to achieve success in the future.

We will of course have to be mindful that there are possibilities of localised lockdowns and partial school closures if cases of Covid-19 rise in our school. We now have a remote learning strategy in place in readiness for these eventualities. To aid parents/carers with remote learning, I invite you to attend a **virtual webinar at 10.30am Wednesday 15th July**. We will explain the vision for September, look at how Microsoft Teams will be used and our expectations of students when using the remote learning platform. To attend please follow the link below or use the Zoom app.

Join Zoom via weblink:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88089340956?pwd=NDhtOE9JQ202UFN2a0FoMEtTZldNdz09>

Password: 0aLA5g

Join Zoom via Zoom app:

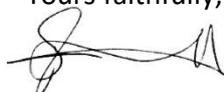
Webinar ID: 880 8934 0956 - Password: 752177

Finally tomorrow morning, Friday 10th July at 10am, the Prime Minister will be giving an address to all school leavers which will be broadcast on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). Further details regarding the collection of GCSE and A'level results for Year 11 and Year 13 will be sent out in next couple of weeks.

Your children deserve a great, safe education and we will not let them down.

I wish to thank you again for your continued support during what has been a very challenging time for all of us and we look forward to updating you in the near future and seeing your child in September.

Yours faithfully,



Mike Smith
Head teacher

