



Horizons Specialist Academy Trust
Providing infinite opportunities

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Abbey Hill Academy, where amazing children, do amazing things!

Full Opening of School in September

Monday 6th July 2020,

Dear parents and carers,

I am writing in relation to new guidance for schools shared by The Government on Thursday 2nd July. We have now had chance to digest this information and have considered our plans for September in light of the recommended new approach.

What will school look like?

It is our intention that from September students will be taught in their tutor groups as one bubble, by their form tutor and their usual support staff. This will minimise any movement around school and will limit interactions between groups of students. I hope this will also reassure all students that they will return in a way that gives them the time and space to adjust to being back in the school environment, supported by the staff and students that know them best accessing a curriculum based on reconnection.

Subject leads will provide the relevant work and the tutor team will deliver this. This will ensure all students still have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Time will also be dedicated to specific wellbeing activities to support the students in their transition to the 'newer' version of Abbey Hill.

Assemblies will be delivered virtually via screens in classrooms and lunches will be delivered to the students. There will be no gatherings in communal areas, such as the school hall.



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Teachers are being encouraged to plan outdoor learning activities, utilising the school site. Therefore, please make sure your child or young person is appropriately dressed for being in and outside of school.

Hand sanitisers will be available in all classrooms and at entry and exit points to each building. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently and for those who might struggle to do this, they will have their own pack of hand wipes made available.

We have tried to keep the school environment looking as positive and welcoming as it normally does. The only addition is the new signs reminding students to keep their distance where possible.

Whilst the previous 2m social distancing rule has been relaxed, we will endeavour to keep a distance between students and staff, where possible without hindering the level of care we are providing.

The enrichment programme (known as TGIW) will still be part of the weekly offer, however, will not involve the joining of groups or the sharing of resources. Tutor teams will consider suitable and relevant activities for their group and deliver this on site. Outings will not be possible, certainly, for the first few weeks.

Who will be expected to go back?

Nearly all children of legal school age will be expected to return to class full-time in September. This includes those with special educational needs and disabilities, or who have been shielding during the pandemic. We are aware that there are some exceptional cases, and for some of our most vulnerable students a return to school may not be possible at that time. Or some students may benefit from a phased return. Please speak to us about this.

Do I have to send my child back?

Attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. Head teachers will be told to follow up pupils' absence and issue sanctions, including fines in some cases. However, please note that we understand that there are often genuine reasons why a child or young person may require time away from school. Again, speak to us about this.

But what if there is a Covid-19 cluster at a school?

If a school has a suspected coronavirus outbreak - with two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in suspected coronavirus sickness absence - teachers will liaise with local health teams.

A mobile testing unit may arrive - focusing first on those in the affected child or teacher's class, followed by their year group, and then the whole school if necessary.

A large number of pupils may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precaution, but the government says a whole school closure "will not generally be necessary" unless advised by health officials.

How will the school day work?

Schools will be asked to return "to a broad and balanced curriculum," Education Secretary Gavin Williamson told the Commons.

They will be asked to minimise the number of contacts each pupil has during the day, by keeping classes or whole year groups apart in separate "protective bubbles" rather than practising individual social distancing.

Schools must:

- have strict hand-washing policies
- promote the "catch it, bin it, kill it" approach when it comes to coughing and sneezing
- step up cleaning arrangements

The government expects school kitchens to be open from September. Our school kitchen has remained open the whole time, and will continue to provide hot meals. Some of you may wish to send your child into school with a packed lunch. Please note, access to fridge space could potentially be limited so consider this when preparing your child's packed meal, and opt to use freezer blocks or 'cool' bags to support this.

What about getting to and from school?

There may be staggered start and finish times to keep groups apart - although that should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. To ensure that we offer the mandatory 5 hours of teaching time a day, we will be shortening the lunch hour. The tutor team will support your child throughout the day and this includes during break and lunchtime.

Walking or cycling to school will be encouraged. Parents should not gather in groups at school gates or come on site without an appointment.

Public transport use should be kept to an "absolute minimum", especially at peak times.

The Local Authority's dedicated school transport services will be asked to:

- Move children in "bubbles"
- Provide hand sanitiser
- Apply social distancing where possible

- Ask children over 11 to wear face coverings

We will also introduce a process for staff and pupils to remove face coverings safely on arrival at school.

What about breakfast or after-school clubs?

If possible these should resume in September, but the government acknowledges it will be "logistically challenging" and may take longer for some schools.

Children should ideally stay within their year groups or bubbles - but if this can't be done then schools should use "small, consistent groups" to minimise the risk of infection.

As part of our usual breakfast provision, we will provide breakfast produce to tutor teams for students to access upon their arrival.

What else does the government say?

- Pupils should wear uniform as normal
- Pupils should bring only essentials to school - including lunch boxes and a coat. Mobile phone should only be brought to school if permission has been sought.
- Pupils and teachers can take books and other shared resources home, but must avoid unnecessary sharing
- Ofsted inspections will remain suspended for the autumn term - but schools may be visited to assess how the new arrangements are working

I am conscious this is a lot to take in. Please be reassured that we are doing everything we can to get as many students back to school in September as possible. Once back in school, we want students to enjoy their time here and have access to fun and stimulating activities. We also want you to feel confident in our arrangements, therefore, if you do have any questions or queries, please do get in touch.

To ensure that our arrangements reflect the needs of your child, we would appreciate it if you could complete the attached form and return this to us at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Whelan