

16th July 2020

Dear Parents and Year 7 students

As Head of Year 7 at The Axholme Academy I am incredibly proud and excited to welcome your child in September. I am committed to ensuring they have the smoothest transition to The Axholme Academy especially, during this difficult time. I am aware that you and your child may be feeling anxious and nervous about their next step into Secondary school however, I would like to reassure you that I and the staff at The Axholme Academy are here to support you and your child with every step of their learning journey.

Allow me to address some of your frequently asked questions:

Q. What will September at The Axholme Academy look like?

Further to the summary in the most recent edition of the Ax@home below is some additional information on the plans we will have in place to open fully for all students and staff in the Autumn term. If you have read the parental guidance from the Government you will understand that to ensure the Academy opens safely we will have to make a range of modifications to our 'normal' methods of educating and supporting our students. I am sure that even after reading this information you will have further questions and we will provide further detailed updates prior to the start of the Autumn term once the site has been fully prepared. This will also enable the Academy to respond to any further changes that may happen over the summer holidays if the Government Guidance changes once again. We will be providing you with a visual overview of the arrangements and the site.

Student Groupings - 'Bubbles'

As mentioned last week, in line with the Government guidance, we will be creating teaching group 'bubbles' in Years 7,8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11 will be putting in place year group 'bubbles'. This is because, as the Government guidance states, *"Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group."*

Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible."

Each year group will be allocated a Zone of the Academy site as their base to reduce the opportunity for different groups mixing and reduce the movement needed across the Academy site. During the Academy day teaching groups will be taught in the same classroom wherever possible for all of their timetabled lessons to reduce the amount of movement around the site and also minimise the number of students who use a teaching space each day. Staff will move around the site to teach students in their 'base' rather than the normal arrangement whereby students move to subject staff in their classroom. We will

provide a map of the site to students and parents in advance of the Autumn term commencing so that students will know where their 'Zone' will be.

Student Arrival and Departure

We will be operating a clear 'arrival at the start of the day and end of day exit plan' using different areas of the site and access points for each year group to avoid year groups mixing. The Academy day will operate under normal start and end times but we will be staggering the entrance and exit to the building to ensure the 'bubbles' do not mix on site. Also, we will be adopting a staggered break and lunchtime, again, to avoid 'bubbles' mixing.

Catering

The Academy will be providing food at lunch-time. We are currently devising a method whereby students (and parents) can pre order lunch food for the week via a Google form. Food will then be available to collect from the diner or hall. This will avoid lengthy queuing and gathering of large groups of students. Hot and cold options will be available but the range of food will be a limited range in comparison to our normal variety. We will be circulating further information on this in the second half of the summer holidays. Students can bring a packed lunch if that is the preferred choice. Food will not be available at break-time so we encourage students to bring a snack to have at this time. Also, we have had to decommission the water coolers around the site as the shared use of water coolers is not permitted under the Guidelines. If students normally fill up a water bottle at school they will have to bring their own fluid refreshments. We encourage students to bring water or juice drinks and not fizzy drinks.

Practical Subjects

We are endeavouring to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum covering the normal wide range of subjects to all students in the Autumn Term. There will be some adaptations to enable this to happen in subjects such as Physical Education and Technology and we will provide more specific detail on this.

Uniform

In line with the Guidance, normal uniform expectations will apply to all students in the Autumn term. We appreciate that it may be challenging to order correct sizes on line with Uniform Direct and they will be operating a free returns policy to support you if you order the wrong size of uniform. More detailed uniform information will be in the Thursday 16th July edition of Ax@home.

Transport

The Academy will be running the bus service following the normal schedule. We will be communicating with parents and students who utilise the bus provision next week with more details as we still have some aspects to clarify with the bus companies.

Hygiene and Prevention of the spread of Coronavirus.

It will be important that all students maintain positive hygiene in line with the guidance. There will be hand sanitiser available across the Academy site and enhanced cleaning in place but we also encourage students to have their own hand sanitiser as well, particularly if they are using transport to travel to/from the Academy.

In summary, the hygiene and prevention measures focus on:

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

We will be providing more detail to students at the start of term to ensure everyone is fully clear how our hygiene and prevention measures and also behaviour expectations will operate on a day to day basis. I am sure students will respond positively.

In recent days the question about face coverings and whether they should be worn in schools has understandably become prevalent. We are waiting for an update and clarity

from the Department of Education on this matter and will include this update in our planning and communication over the holiday period.

We are all looking forward to having all students and staff back on the Academy site but we also realise that the move back to school will be an anxious time. We will be doing everything possible to ensure we support the emotional well-being of all students alongside focusing on academic progress. To help support the transition back into school we will be phasing the start to the Autumn Term for different year groups. This will enable all of our students to be supported fully to what is going to be a very different structure to their Academy day. New Year 7 students have missed out on all of the transition experience of visiting the Academy and meeting staff and it is vitally important to help our newest students settle into their 'new' life at Axholme Academy. So, Year 7 will be on site fully from Thursday 3rd September and other years will have a phased return.

The arrangements for the start of Autumn Term are:

Thursday 3rd September - Years 7, 10 and 11 on site
Friday 4th September - Years 7, 8, 9 on site
Monday 7th September - All year groups back on site

Q: Is there any chance of a transition day this year?

A: Unfortunately due to restrictions imposed by the Government guidelines, we were unable to organise physical transition days this year. We have done our level best online however and placed all transition activities for students to complete on Google Classroom and/or the Academy website. We would like for all tasks to have been attempted by September to enable your child to have the best start to their learning journey.

Q: How will you work out ability groupings if students have not completed their SATs?

A: Students are eventually grouped by ability in Maths and Science lessons, other lessons are mixed ability. Although we have received some data from primary schools - this naturally has some inconsistency and wouldn't be used to create ability groups in September. We will therefore use what we know to initially create partially-mixed ability bubbles and perform some baseline assessments early in the Autumn term to create Maths and Science classes as things change. We constantly keep the ability in classes under review to ensure that students are grouped properly in Maths and Science.

Q: What does my child need for their first day in September?

A: Students will need to ensure they bring their normal basic equipment, such as pens, pencils, ruler, rubber, pencil sharpener and calculator. There will be no sharing of equipment so it is very important that students bring their own. They will not need PE kit or any specialised equipment on their first day as they will be yet to know their timetable.

Q: Will my child need any money for their first day?

A: No, they will not need to bring any money. Dinner cards can be topped up via ParentPay prior to starting in September and more information about pre ordering and paying for food will be sent over the summer holiday.

Q: How does my child get a bus pass? Can I get a bus pass if we live outside of the catchment area?

A: For those living within the catchment area, bus passes can be organised through the North Lincolnshire Council website. For those living outside of the catchment area, transport letters will be released very soon and all details will be contained in this letter

Q: How will students know which bus to get on?

A: All bus passes will have a bus number on them. All buses display these numbers when transporting students. There will be staff members present on duty at the end of the day to assist any students to get on the correct bus.

Q: Can we have a bus timetable?

A: For those living within catchment area, a bus timetable was included in the Transition Booklet that was sent out via email and is also available on the Academy website. For those living outside of the catchment area, your pick up and drop off time will be sent out to you once these passes have been organised.

Q: Will there be someone to meet the Year 7 students on their first day of school?

A: There is always a member of staff on duty in the mornings and on the first day of school, staff will be there to meet and direct students to their arrival point

Q: Will students be given a map of the school?

A: A map of the school has been emailed out to all students in advance already and they will be given a specific one in September. Due to Government guidance, there will be a new way of working in September whereby students will be based in the same room for the majority of their lessons and their movement will be restricted around the school site

Q: Will there be people to help students who get lost or don't know where to go?

A: Due to the guidance above, the area that Year 7 students inhabit will be a lot smaller than it would be usually therefore it will be less likely that students will get lost - however there will also be a dedicated Year 7 team to support them.

Q: Will students be in a Form group with someone that they know?

A: We have organised permanent Form groups based on information from primary staff to try and ensure that they are in a Form group with someone that they know. These Form groups will follow all the way through until they are in Year 11 so they will get to know each other really well. Due to Government guidelines, students will initially have their Tutor time within their class bubble instead - therefore, we have also attempted to ensure, wherever possible, that students are with someone that they know. As explained above, these are partially constructed through ability therefore it is not always necessarily possible.

Q: When will students meet their Form Tutor and find out who they are?

A: 'Keeping in Touch' phone calls took place on Friday 10th July where permanent Form Tutors contacted their Form group. They have also written replies to the Lockdown Letter Writing challenge which will be emailed out today. Though they may not have their permanent Form Tutor within their bubble for now they will have one of the same Tutor Team - the individual year group teams work very closely together and meet regularly to discuss student support.

Q: What time is lunch?

A: Each year group will have an allocated lunch break sometime between 12:45pm and 2:00pm

Q: Will Year 7 students have lunch with everyone else?

A: Due to the Government guidelines, lunch will take place in year groups and, like the rest of our cohort; Year 7 will be unable to mix with older students initially.

Q: Can students swap from dinners to packed lunches?

A: Students can choose whether they want to have a school dinner or a packed lunch each day. Due to catering arrangements for September, students may have to place their order for school dinners a week in advance.

Q: How will I see my friends if they are not in my class?

A: As per government guidelines, during break and lunch time students within the same year group will be able to mix with other class bubbles - so long as they follow appropriate hygiene practices

Q: Can we rent lockers in advance?

A: Due to Government guidance, we will not be allowing students to use lockers during the Autumn term. We recently sent an email out about this.

Q: How can I go about ordering and trying on uniform?

A: Uniform Direct supply our day wear uniform - you can either order online at uniform-direct.com or visit one of their stores in Gainsborough, Grimsby or Lincoln by booking an appointment. Design Box are our suppliers for the PE kit and you can place your order online at designboxuk.com or by calling 01302 364144.

Q: What is the mobile phone policy?

A: Our full mobile phone policy can be found on the Academy website. Mobile phones should not be seen, heard or used within school except for when directed to by a member of staff for teaching and learning purposes. Students should not use mobile phones at all during break and lunch periods

Q: When will I learn French?

A: French will be on the school timetable for Year 7's in September

Q: Do you have a lego club?

A: Mr Pendrey (Science) runs a STEM club; you can contact him for further information (bpendrey@theaxholmeacademy.com). He's continued online LEGO challenges during lockdown.

If you have any further questions or concerns then please email me directly - eleigh@theaxholmeacademy.com.

On behalf of myself and Mr Keogh I would like to say thank you for your engagement and support during this challenging transition period. It has been a pleasure to see so many students engaged in our transition activities, these will remain on the website and on Google classrooms throughout the summer holidays. Finally, have a great summer, stay safe and we look forward to welcoming you into the school in September.

Yours faithfully

Miss E Leigh
Head of Year 7