



Dear parents and carers,

I hope you all enjoyed the summer break. We are really looking forward to welcoming our students back to Ark Acton next week on their designated day.

In spite of the turbulence of the past year we were delighted that 73% of our Y13 students have secured places at Top Third Universities and 43% at Russell Group (The top 24 universities in the UK) with the rest of the year group having secured places on high quality apprenticeships. We are looking to build on this success over the next 12 months as we continue our improvement journey.

I wanted to write to you to keep you up to date with our ongoing planning around the Coronavirus and what school will look and feel like for our students from next week. As with last year, the information below is in-line with the latest government guidance and I will write to you if and when the guidance changes and our plans need to be updated.

I appreciate that this is a long letter but do please read through it with your child before the start of term.

Start dates in September

In order that we can run a full induction programme for each year group there is a staggered start in September and year groups are to arrive for their first day back on the dates below:

- Year 7 and Year 12 – **Tuesday 7th September**
- Years 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 – **Wednesday 8th September**
- Academic Review Day 1 – **Friday 10th September** – we will be sending out appointment times for this on 6th September 2021.

Bubbles

We will no longer operate bubbles in the new term, which means that assemblies and larger group activities can resume and students from different classes and year groups will be able to mix. We will still reduce mixing as far as possible.

Face coverings

The government has removed the need to wear face coverings on school premises. However, they recommend that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not usually meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school. We appreciate that some staff and students may wish to wear face masks at school, and they can do so if they want to.

Close contact tracing

Schools will no longer be responsible for contact tracing for positive cases of COVID-19, and this will be led by NHS Test and Trace. From 16th August, children under 18 years old identified as a close contact of a confirmed positive **will not need to self-isolate** and will be advised by NHS Test and Trace to take a PCR test. Children aged 18 years old will be treated as a child until four months after their 18th birthday and will then be treated as an adult.

Outbreaks

In the event of an outbreak at the school or in the local area, we may be advised to reintroduce bubbles and face coverings and may be asked to support NHS Test and Trace with close contact tracing. If this becomes necessary, we will communicate this to you.

COVID-19 testing

Testing remains essential in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within our school community. We will facilitate two tests for every student who consents at the start of the academic year and continue



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to encourage staff and students to take rapid lateral flow tests twice a week during term-time and the holidays if staff are on site.

Isolating if travelling from abroad

Keep in mind that you and your family may need to self-isolate when you return from a trip overseas. You should plan your trip so that any self-isolation should also fall within the school holidays. The government can change the red, amber, green classification of countries on short notice. You will need to respond to the latest rules on international travel, even if you have already left the UK, while also minimising the impact on your child's education. You can find out more about the travel rules here: www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england.

Where possible, we will provide remote education for students unable to return from abroad due to COVID-19 travel restrictions while they are abroad.

Staying safe

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. If you are worried about your child's symptoms, or they are worsening, you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://111.nhs.uk> or by phoning 111. There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19, do:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

We will continue to ensure students have regular handwashing opportunities: before and after eating, after breaks, changing rooms etc. Hand sanitiser is available throughout the school, and we will make sure that children wash their hands often. The school will continue with enhanced cleaning arrangements, paying particular attention to surfaces that are regularly touched. We will also keep spaces well ventilated and will not allow anyone with COVID-19 symptoms to enter the site.

I hope this letter offers reassurance to the measures we are keeping in place to ensure a safe start to the autumn term. We all recognise how difficult the past 18 months have been and the sacrifices that everyone has had to make, so we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for everything you have done.

All students from whom we have received consent will complete an onsite LFD test on their first day back and then again 3 – 5 days later. If you do not consent to your child being tested and you have not completed the consent form stating this then please email admin@arkacton.org

As ever, do please get in contact if you have any questions about the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Knight
Principal