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13 July 2020

Dear Parent or Carer

We are writing to you with our next update on our plans for September. As you will probably be aware, the government has now published its guidance for schools and we have been working hard to ensure we can implement all of the guidance in September but also go further to ensure all our schools remain as safe as they can possibly be for students, staff and families.

### **What the guidance says**

The government requires all students to return to school in September and for all schools to:

- Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell
- Ensure people clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the “catch it, kill it, bin it” approach
- Introduce enhanced cleaning arrangements.

Schools must introduce measures to minimise contact between individuals and groups of people and to maintain distancing “where possible”. In addition, schools must engage with NHS test and trace and local Public Health England to ensure any cases of COVID-19 are managed properly, using expert support and guidance.

### **How the guidance differs from previous guidance**

The government’s guidance differs very significantly from previous guidance. Most notably, there is no longer an expectation that secondary-aged students practice social distancing while in class but now year groups should be kept separate from other year groups. Staff are able to see more than one group of students in a day but should try to maintain up to 2 metres distance from students and other adults throughout the school day.

### **What we are doing**

We are developing detailed plans trust-wide and at school level. These plans allow us to maintain separation between year groups of students by staggering movement on arrival and departures and staggering break times and lunchtimes. We are also reducing the number of transition points in the day so that students are in corridors and non-classroom spaces less often and are able to distance more effectively from each other around school. We are setting things up so that students and staff will be able to sanitise hands frequently and tables and surfaces are wiped down regularly. In addition, there will be more frequent cleaning of corridors, door handles, toilets etc. and we will make some changes to catering arrangements so that we minimise the risk of transmission of the virus. We will continue to develop our online platforms so that we are able to respond quickly if there are any future lockdowns either locally or nationally.



The Education Alliance is a charitable limited company registered in England and Wales No. 7542211 whose registered office is at the above address.



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## How will schools look different?

The challenge of keeping year groups separate is very significant. Under normal timetabling arrangements there are 8 points in the day when all students in a school are moving between lessons or are out and about with other students at break time or lunchtime. This presents much too high a level of risk to both students and staff and gives too many opportunities for the virus to spread from year group to year group. In order to reduce risk significantly, we will be changing how we timetable so that students have 3 extended blocks of time each day where they are in one classroom (rather than 5 lessons and a tutor period in 6 different rooms). During that block of time, they will have 100 minutes of teaching in one subject and these blocks will also accommodate tutoring, staggered breaks, staggered lunchtimes and movement.

Rather than having, for example, 2 one hour history lessons on different days as they would in a conventional timetable, those lessons will happen back to back in 100 minutes. As we said in our last letter, we are committed to maintaining our broad curriculum where students continue to study all their subjects. This plan allows us to offer almost everything we would normally offer in terms of teaching and curriculum time and is the safest way of ensuring that students from different year groups do not come into extended contact with each other during the school day.

There will be some new rules and systems to ensure students and staff are kept safe, specifically around how students arrive at school and leave, how they move around school, where they spend break times and lunchtimes, how PE and practical subjects will operate and what is expected from them in terms of sensible behaviour. Getting back into school routines will be vital from day one and we will be doing a lot to make that happen as quickly as possible. From September, students will be required to wear their normal uniform.

We expect a normal service of school travel to resume but with some changes to routines, with students sitting with students from the same year group and face coverings to be worn on public transport. More information regarding this will follow from the local authority.

## Catch Up

As we said in our last letter, we do not believe that every student needs a huge programme of catch up in their own time. The best thing we can do for all our young people is offer them expert teaching and support, identifying any gaps they may have as we go along. That is what we will do. Our priority must be students who are closest to external exams or assessments - Year 11 and Year 13. We will be offering a programme of catch up to those students, starting after the October half term holiday. These sessions will take place after the normal school day on Monday to Thursday and will be delivered by our teachers. If next year's Year 10 and Year 12 students require similar catch up, we will offer that in 2021-22. Alongside this, we will access the new external National Tutor Programme, prioritising educationally disadvantaged youngsters and those with additional needs in any year group. More information about these programmes, including travel arrangements, will follow as soon as we receive it.



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### What will happen next?

You will receive another letter in late August with the fine detail of how the school day will operate, including more on how the school day will look but in the meantime students should assume they are back in school full time from September with as close to normal a school experience as we can safely operate. Start and end times to the school day remain unchanged.

As ever, we are enormously grateful for your support and we are looking forward to welcoming students back in September. We continue to work hard to make our schools as safe as we can and will share further detail in August. Wishing you and your families the very best.

Wishing you and your families the very best.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JR Uttley'.

Jonny Uttley  
CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ratheram'.

Scott Ratheram  
Executive Principal



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