

WINDSOR ROAD
CAISTER-ON-SEA
GREAT YARMOUTH
NORFOLK
NR30 5LS

ACTING PRINCIPAL:
ANN BRIDGES

T +44 (0)1493 720542
E enquiries@caisteracademy.org.uk
www.caisteracademy.org.uk



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Monday 20 July 2020

Dear Parents

September Reopening – Update 1

I am writing to share our plans so far for the full reopening of the academy to all students in September. This planning will continue throughout the summer and I will write to you again later in the holiday with fuller details for some areas. For now, I wanted to provide an initial update as early as possible. As always now, these plans are subject to change based on local and national circumstances.

Rationale

On 2 July the Department for Education (DfE) published guidance to schools to support full reopening. This guidance emphasises the need for schools to offer a broad curriculum, a full school day and opportunities to catch up any lost learning. Alongside this, schools should take whatever steps are within their means to ensure the safety of students and staff. The guidelines recognise that different schools will have different mechanisms for achieving this, depending on their individual circumstances. This direction of safety, whilst providing as close to a normal experience as possible, is what has driven our decision making.

Hygiene Measures

We will expect students to sanitise their hands properly and regularly and will instruct and remind them of the importance of doing so. Sanitising gel and additional hand washing stations will be available for students to use in-between lessons and before and after eating.

We will increase the number of student toilets available and make them year group specific, to minimise crossover between year groups.

We will insist on good respiratory hygiene and will provide spare tissues and guidance on their appropriate disposal.

We will make sure that all rooms are well-ventilated.

We will clean rooms in-between their use by different year groups. To make this possible, we are employing cleaners on site during the school day.

We will show students how to sanitise any computer equipment that they use and will monitor to ensure that they do so.

We will send a more detailed letter on hygiene nearer September. This will also include information about how we all need to respond if we develop symptoms from the recognised list and how we will engage with the Track and Trace Service and local public health authorities.

Year Group Bubbles

The DfE guidance suggests that a key strategy for minimising mixing between students is to group them into large bubbles. Where these bubbles cross, social distancing should be observed where possible.

Following this, we have grouped students by year group, each with their own area of the academy. Students within a year group will move between classrooms in their area, occasionally being taken to a specialist classroom for specific practical lessons. As in the guidance, teachers will move between areas, maintaining social distancing where possible. This will allow us to run all subjects normally offered.

Each year group will have a designated entry and exit point to the site, dining area, outdoor space, study room and toilets. Where students share facilities at different times, such as dining spaces or specialist classrooms, these will be cleaned between uses. We will send more information on where those designated points and areas will be, nearer to reopening.

We will also establish lesson changeover procedures, including a one-way system in certain areas, in order to minimise interaction in the corridors.

Staggered Start and Finish

The DfE guidance also gives clear direction that if possible, schools should stagger start and finish times to keep groups apart as they enter and leave school. Therefore, Years 9, 10 and 11 will start and finish the school day 20 minutes later, at 9.00am and 3.20pm respectively. Years 7 and 8 will start and finish the school day at the previously communicated times of 8.40am and 3.00pm respectively.

To coordinate the rest of the school day, Years 7 and 8 will have an extended form time and a shorter Period 5. This additional time in form will be used for Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) which will no longer be taken from lessons during the week.

We will also split break, in a similar way to our plans to split lunch. This means that Years 7 and 8 will have different break and lunch times to Years 9, 10 and 11.

These additional staggers are shown on the enclosed Temporary Structure of the Academy Day document.

Return to School Dates

As students return we will be taking the time to explain our new procedures, provide opportunities to reflect on the experiences of the last few months and provide wellbeing support. So this can be achieved and the return managed safely, we will stagger the return of students by year group:

- Monday 7 September – Years 7 and 11
- Tuesday 8 September – Years 7, 8, 10 and 11.
- Wednesday 9 September – All year groups.

In addition, there are two transition events taking place over the summer for our incoming Year 7 students. Mrs Lumley, our Assistant Vice Principal, has written separately to Year 6 parents about these.

Uniform and Equipment

The DfE is encouraging schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term and there is no longer a requirement to wash clothes more often than normal. Therefore, normal uniform expectations will apply. These can be found on the academy website.

To reduce the need for sharing equipment and promote students taking responsibility for their learning, we are updating our expected equipment list. It will be essential that students bring the correct equipment to school every day and this will be monitored through form time. This new equipment list will be shared in good time for September.

Sustenance

We are currently working with our catering suppliers, Aspens, to ensure that a range of healthy hot food and lighter snacks can still be provided for students. To avoid year group crossover, this food will be available from each year group's designated dining area. Payment will continue to be cashless and more detailed information on how students can order food will follow nearer September.

Cold drinks will also be available; however, we would recommend that students bring their own water bottle to school to keep hydrated during lesson times.

We will continue to offer breakfast club before school. This will be located in a large dining area where students in different year groups can be socially distanced.

Enrichment

Year group designated study spaces will be available every day after school to support students who wish to remain on site to continue working.

A broad range of clubs and activities will also run once students have returned and we are confident of our ability to deliver these safely. Further information on these will be published prior to them beginning.

Transport to and from School

Government advice is to avoid public transport and walk or cycle to school. Students who do travel to school on public buses will be taught how to handle their face covering when arriving in school.

To avoid congestion and due to restricted space in the car park, the vehicular entrance at the main gate will be closed during start and finish times. There will be no drop off or pick up on site, unless by prior arrangement for specific circumstances.

We will provide suggestions on the easiest drop off points near the school, when we confirm the entrances and exits we will ask year groups to use.

Pastoral Support

Thank you to those parents who were able to take the time to complete the well-being survey attached to my previous letter. The results of this are being used to support our planning for September.

In addition, if there is anything of a pastoral nature that we should know so we can support your child's smooth reintegration back into full time school, please contact the school via the normal channels. Please note that due to the summer holidays, responses to enquires may take slightly longer than usual.

New Staff

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce two new members of staff who will play important leadership roles in ensuring the safe running of the school as students return.

Helen Seath will be joining the academy in September as our new Vice Principal. Miss Seath brings a wealth of experience to the role, having demonstrated considerable positive impact in a range of leadership roles at previous schools. Re-establishing this previously vacant position will provide the academy with important operational leadership, both through the term ahead and as we continue to develop.

Tom Osben, currently a cover supervisor at the academy, will become our Head of Year 7 from September. The appointment of a fifth Head of Year will provide additional capacity to our pastoral team and ensure we are able to continue to provide a high standard of support to all our students. I am sure you will join me in congratulating Mr Osben on his appointment. All current Heads of Year will follow their students through into the next year group up.

There are also a number of other outstanding staff joining the academy in September. A full list of all of our leavers and joiners will be published in an early newsletter next term.

I hope the information above gives you a clearer view of our planning to date and provides reassurance that we will be doing everything possible to keep our young people safe on their return to school, alongside providing an excellent quality of education.

I look forward to writing again in a few weeks. Until then, I wish you an enjoyable start to the summer holidays.

Yours faithfully



Mr Ben Driver
Principal Designate

Enclosed:

- DfE Guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>
- Temporary Structure of the Academy Day

Temporary Structure of the Academy Day

This structure is temporary and based upon government guidance for full opening.

Time	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
8.00am	<i>Breakfast</i>				
8:40am	Form Time <i>DEAR</i>				
9.00am			Form Time		
9:20am	Period 1		Period 1		
10:20am	Break		Period 2		
10:40am	Period 2				
11.20am	Break				
11.40am	Period 3		Period 3		
12:40pm	Lunch		Period 4		
1.20pm	Period 4				
1.40pm					
2.20pm	Period 5		Period 5		
3.00pm	<i>After school study</i>				
3.20pm					

Before and after school:

- Breakfast is available in the dining hall every day from 8.00am to 8.30am.
- Students should be on site no later than five minutes before form time.
- After school study spaces are available every day until at least 4.00pm.

We will keep this structure under review and update as necessary.