

15th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Important information regarding the re-opening of The Dean Academy in September

We know that many of you may have mixed feelings around what a return to school will be like in September and that several different interpretations of Government guidance have been discussed in the press recently. As such, we are writing to you to outline our positive plans to fully re-open the school in September and ensure you are confident in the safety measures we are implementing alongside our naturally high expectations for our young people.

The first thing to say is that we are absolutely delighted the Government has confirmed all students can return to school. We have all learnt a lot in lockdown about how to deliver virtual education, and families and staff have been outstanding, but children need the routine of normal school life and they also need to see their friends and teachers. It is vital that we get students back to school in September, and the government has made attendance, for all students, mandatory. Should there be any unanticipated extensions to shielding advice over the summer holidays, please get in touch with us and we can work together to work within the guidance.

We have clear plans for what September will look like and from the outset we will be making sure that our focus is on wellbeing because we know that young people make the best academic progress when they are happy, confident and feel safe. Within our plans, there are five main ways in which we will be establishing a safe return to school for all students:

1. **Bubbles** – Every child will be placed in a “protective bubble,” consisting of students solely within their year group. Bubbles will not come into prolonged, close contact with each other, which will help keep the school safe. For example, students in Year 8 will be in a bubble in the same zone of the school for every lesson. In KS4 students will be in a bubble with their year group enabling them to go to options lessons. There will be staggered breaks and lunchtimes to help keep bubbles apart.
2. **Staggered starts/finish** – Arrival times at The Dean Academy are naturally staggered; some students rely entirely on bus travel while others walk to school from the local area. From September, buses will arrive 0830-0840 and we would ask for any child arriving otherwise to try and arrive between 0840-0850. As students arrive, they will be directed to one of three separate entrances to the building each with newly installed handwashing facilities. This will help with minimising the contact between students across year groups and also help with directing students to their zone. We will, however, have a staggered end to the day. Please see overleaf the structure of the day for timings specific to your child’s year group. Should parents drop their child at school we ask that parents remain in their vehicle, and if you need to speak with a member of staff you make an appointment.
3. **Transport** – Government advice published recently states that students should walk or cycle to school wherever possible. However, we know that a large proportion of our students rely on buses to get to school. We are working closely with the bus providers to ensure that this provision is as safe as possible. Early conversations with our providers indicate they are taking this very seriously, with talks of seat numbers and grouping students based on their bubble in school. We recommend that any student who must take the bus to school should wear a face mask and try to sit amongst other students from their year group wherever possible. We are entirely confident that all students who travel on buses will be able to adapt to new measures in September, which might involve being allocated a seat and not being able to sit with friends. This short-term measure will maintain safety at the highest level and we would be grateful if you could speak to your child about this if applicable.
4. **Movement around site** - There will be significantly less movement around site, and between lessons, as we plan to keep students in one place as much as possible and ask staff to travel between classrooms. For example, in KS3 students will only move in order to access specialist teaching rooms such as Art or Technology lessons. For the majority of their classes, students will stay in one zone, as illustrated overleaf.

5. **Break and Lunch** - There will be three separate break times and three separate lunchtimes, staggered throughout the day to help reduce contact between students and across year groups. This will mean that no more than two year groups are out on break/lunch at the same time ensuring we can support students closely in maintaining safe social distancing. We have planned to break our outdoor space into zones so that mixing between year groups is restricted, and we have re-arranged our canteen to enable two separate one way systems. We will still be able to offer both hot and cold food to our students from our canteen, but students will need to “grab and go”. We will share further details about how this will work in due course. Further, students will be expected to wash their hands regularly, including before and after they eat and on leaving our site, alongside an enhanced cleaning regime around site.

Dates for September - To explain these new expectations to our children and to implement our plans effectively we will not open to all year groups at once in September. Instead we will re-open over two days, with all students back in school by Thursday 3rd September. Details of our opening for different year groups can be found below:

Tuesday September 1 st	All staff INSET day <i>(please note there will also be a y7 parents information evening – details in separate letter)</i>
Wednesday 2 nd September	Students in Years 7 and 11 return
Thursday 3 rd September	All other year groups return

Every child, and every home, has had a different experience with lockdown and home learning. Whilst we know the majority of families will be delighted that schools are reopening, there may be some parents or students who feel anxious about returning: if this applies to you, please do not wait until September before reaching out. If you have concerns about a full return to school in September please contact us as soon as you can (via info@thedeacademy.org) and we will work with you to ensure you feel reassured that all your concerns have been addressed.

In addition to the safety measures set out above, we are well prepared in terms of securing the wellbeing and academic progress of students – both those who have not been able to return to school this term and those who will be taking important public examinations next year. We recognise that there may be learning gaps to be addressed when the students return and have planned a ‘recovery’ curriculum for the autumn term so that everyone has the chance to feel secure in their subject knowledge. We will also ensure there is time devoted to the emotional wellbeing of students. We are fully committed to ensuring that the return to school for our young people is happy and positive.

We will, of course, also need your help and support to keep school safe as we return to school. Obviously if your son or daughter, or somebody else in your household, has coronavirus symptoms they should stay at home until tested. Likewise, the government guidance says that if there is a confirmed case at school, then we should work with the relevant health authorities to ensure that everyone who was in close contact with them when they were infectious is notified and self-isolates.

Please also note that students will be expected to return to school in full uniform. It is important that we set, and hold ourselves to, high standards when school re-opens despite the significant challenges we have faced due to Covid-19. If you are unsure of the expectations around uniform please see our website (<https://thedeacademy.org/uniform/>) which also details where uniform can be purchased. Should you have any difficulty in ensuring your child has access to full uniform please contact us as we can help. Again, please do not wait until September to reach out. On arrival, if any child does not have full uniform, we will loan them shoes/a blazer until they can be purchased.

Finally, this summer term has been long and tiring for families and staff, but it has also been inspiring and uplifting. The whole community has pulled together to ensure students felt safe and supported, and we have shown just how much can be achieved in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. No matter what your experience of lockdown, parents have been terrific: on behalf of all staff, we want to thank you for everything you have done to support your children’s success over this period, and to support our school.

Yours sincerely



Richard Brand
Headteacher

Reducing movement around site – year group zones

