

Friday 10th July, 2020.



Penketh High School

Dear Parents and Carers,

Guidance from the DfE has been issued to schools that relates to the government's plans to ensure that all schools reopen fully to all pupils from September 2020. The school has considered the guidance carefully and planned comprehensively to develop the best possible provision whilst ensuring the wellbeing of staff and pupils as a priority, in line with the guidance issued.

I wanted to write to you and outline plans for our return in September so that you can understand the actions that we are taking to adhere to the guidance. It's important to note that plans are subject to any revisions to guidance across the summer and are subject to a full risk assessment that we'll be working on across the summer. Normally communication between school and families would cease during the summer break, but this year we'll be continuing to issue information as September approaches providing fine detail relating to specific logistical arrangements that pupils will need to be aware of before they access school.

Social Groupings

The guidance issued by the DfE clearly states that schools should minimise contacts between individuals and that "the overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals."

We are advised that "in secondary schools, and certainly in the older age groups at key stage 4 and key stage 5, the groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and students to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended. At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (key stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with coronavirus (COVID-19)."

We have therefore remodelled our curriculum structure to allow for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils to operate in year group bubbles, ensuring that pupils can undertake their core curriculum but still allow them to undertake their optional GCSE subjects. Pupils in Key Stage 4 will be grouped into 8 classes across English, Maths based on prior ability and progress to date. These groupings will be consistent for these core subjects and, as they make up the majority of a pupils allocated time in school, will ensure we can minimise mixing of pupils. It will be necessary for pupils in these year groups to undertake their wider subjects, including Science and their chosen subjects, in groups that are mixed in order to maintain their current curriculum and suite of subjects.

Key Stage 3 pupils will be placed in groups also based on their prior attainment and current progress to date. Pupils in Year 7 – 9 will undertake all subjects within their assigned group and only PE will require some mixing in order to provide this specialist subject teaching.

All year groups will only ever be required to mix with pupils within their own year group; but all year groups will conduct the majority of their allocated taught hours within the same class group.



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THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

Penketh High School, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2BY

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Principal: Mr J Carlin BA(Hons) NPQH





Year 7 will undertake their curriculum as part of a singular, mixed ability, form group over the first half term. This will allow the school to get to know the pupils, for them to adjust to not only being back at school after a lengthy period of absence, but also being at a new school. Part of the induction process will involve pupils undertaking baselines assessments to help inform our setting process from October half term.

Logistics and transportation

The guidance for school states that “groups should be kept apart” and that “travel to school patterns differ greatly between schools. If those patterns allow, schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time.”

The school relies heavily on a school bus service to allow a number of pupils to access the site. This requires a large number of pupils from different year groups to interact in close proximity, which would result in the mixing of groups. Similarly, the arrival at school at a common time results in the pupils mixing on arrival. Form rooms and teaching rooms are also located across the school site often with different year groups required to be in the same area or on the same corridor; again this would result in the mixing of pupils.

Finally, as well as the suggested staggered start and end times the guidance suggests that “while passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools should also consider staggered break times and lunch times”.

We are therefore going to adopt a number of temporary changes to the structure of the school day for the academic Year 2020-21.

Firstly, start times will be staggered for pupils across the morning. The school has two areas that can be used as “open” entrances. That is to say that these areas allow for a number of pupils to enter the school without requiring pupils to be in close proximity. There will be three arrival slots, one for Year 10 and 11, one for Year 7 and 8 and one for Year 9. Pupils will be assigned an entrance that will either be via the gates on Riley yard, or the gates onto Rosetta Yard. Start times will be as follows;

Year 10 and 11 – 8:30am

Year 7 and 8 – 9am

Year 9 – 9:30am

These staggered start times lend themselves to allowing each year group to undertake a staggered day for all of their scheduled sessions. That is to say that break will be staggered, lunch will be staggered as will the teaching periods of the day and the end time for the day. The structure of the day will be as follows;



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	Period 1 & 2	Break	Period 3	Lunch	Period 4 & 5	Period 6	End
Year 11	8:30am	10:30am	10:45am	11:45am	12:15pm	14:15pm	15:15pm
	Rosetta	Rosetta		Rosetta			Rosetta
Year 10	8:30am	10:30am	10:45am	11:45am	12:15pm		14:15pm
	Riley	Riley		Riley			Riley
Year 9	9:30am	11:30am	11:45am	12:45pm	13:15pm		15:15pm
	Riley	Riley		Riley			Riley
Year 8	9am	11am	11:15am	12:15pm	12:45pm		14:45pm
	Rosetta	Rosetta		Rosetta			Rosetta
Year 7	9am	11am	11:15am	12:15pm	12:45pm		14:45pm
	Riley	Riley		Riley			Riley

We are currently liaising with the Warrington’s Own Buses regarding a service that will allow pupils to get on their “Year” bus ensuring that they only mix with pupils in their year group during transportation to and from school. The guidance states that “how pupils are grouped together on transport, where possible this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school”, so transportation would be reflective of “bubbles” for each year group that we have in school.

Curriculum

The staggering of key points within the day means that the curriculum can’t run as previously planned, this is as a result of one year group having period 1 when another year group is undertaking period 2 and so staff being unavailable to deliver the periods to relevant year groups as planned. In addition, the current timetable works on the basis of whole school movement, predominantly on a lesson-by-lesson basis with very few extended periods being spent in the same subject area. This is at odds with the guidance that states “When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the school site kept to a minimum”.

We have taken a decision therefore to remap the curriculum for next year to allow for four key principles to be followed;

- Maintain teaching time each day and a broad and balanced curriculum being delivered to pupils
- Consider the needs of pupils to catch up and be prepared for examinations in Summer 2021
- Reduce the movement of pupils where possible around the site
- Allow for staggered periods to best support the separation of groups.

The new curriculum allows all pupils to undertake all of the subjects that were planned for next year. So there will be no reduction in the number of subjects that pupils access. This means that pupils undertake a broad and balanced curriculum spanning the core, foundation, creative, technology, and social science suite of subjects.

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In Year 10 and 11 there has been a reduction in the number of hours being undertaken in RE. This curriculum will now focus on delivery of statutory content. This is to allow for pupils to undertake both History and Geography in Year 10 as pupils have missed the conclusion of year 9 and therefore not had the chance to study key knowledge to which they are entitled across key stage 3 as part of the national curriculum. Pupils will therefore maintain both subjects into their final GCSE year from September 2021.

Year 11 have been afforded additional time towards their studies in Maths, English and Science so as to ensure that they have time to recover from being away from school for a prolonged period. We don't want the period of closure to impact negatively on their preparations for their exams in the Summer.

Additionally, a sixth period has been built in to the timetable for Year 11 to provide pupils with much needed time to ensure the best possible preparation for their examinations. These sessions will allow for an extra hour per week than would normally be the case for pupils to work closely with their Maths, English, Science, Humanities, Languages and option subject staff. At the outset of the year pupils in Year 11 will be provided with the option of using this sixth period each day to complete their studies in computer science/ICT and/or RE to gain a qualification in these subjects or to not study these subjects as examination courses and focus on additional time to prepare for exams in their other subjects. The school will work closely with pupils and parents to decide what would be in the best interests of pupils in this scenario and clearly a huge emphasis will be placed on the amount of engagement displayed by pupils during the remote learning phase – and their current progress.

As the spread of subjects available to pupils remains largely the same, the main purpose of remapping the curriculum is to ensure staff availability to deliver to pupils at any given point and to establish where concentrated periods of time could be spent in single subjects. The setting process for this year allows for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 to remain in a pupil base for the majority of their subjects (requiring mixing in PE). Year 10 and 11 will be delivered to in consistent sets for Maths, English whilst remaining subjects will require mixing; however, with the exception of practical subjects, lessons can be delivered in the same pupil base rooms.

Specialist teaching will be available in Science, DT, FT, Art, Drama, Music, ICT, Digital Art and PE where necessary and as such rooms in these areas have not been used as pupil base rooms. Pupils will move to these rooms and as lengthier breaks between usage will be built in to the timetable, this affords us the opportunity for ensuring cleaning of equipment before the next group make use of the room.

The timetable has been mapped and blocked in a way that extended lessons are promoted within the curriculum. That is to say, pupils undertake lengthier double periods in subject areas, again with a view to ensuring that "movement around the school site kept to a minimum" as identified within the guidance issued to schools.

In order to accommodate plans for the separation of groups by staggering both start and end times for different year groups and to ensure the full delivery of the planned curriculum, we can't undertake our registration periods in the traditional way. Form time will therefore be combined into a personal development period each week so that pupils will effectively have a lengthier 1 hour form period with their tutor each week.

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Enrichment

Enrichment has become an essential part of the school day and offers so much to allow pupils to develop holistically alongside their academic pursuits. Sadly, the required staggering of lunch time and the separation of year groups means that enrichment won't be able to run as it has done for the last two years. We will continue to offer a rich and varied enrichment offer, with a strong focus on careers, future pathways and wider experiences. We will be issuing further information as to how we will continue to deliver enrichment to pupils over the coming weeks.

A key part of our personal development curriculum delivered in the tutorial/registration sessions will be virtual assemblies that will be delivered each week following our usual programme. These are highlighted as suggested good practice as the guidance states that we must continue to avoid mass gatherings. Assemblies will be pre-recorded and shown in forms virtually through our Teams platform.

Other Considerations

Pupils will be able to return to school in full school uniform from September, no additional or special cleaning arrangements are required. Our uniform policy hasn't changed and we expect pupils to attend school in September in full school uniform. Pupils will also be able to bring equipment to school and so there is also an expectation that pupils will attend school with at least the basic equipment required to undertake a successful school day. An equipment list can be found in pupil planners.

Our intention was to provide you with as much information as possible regarding our planning for September. Clearly there remains eight weeks until pupils return to school and the guidance was only issued to schools last week. So work will continue over the summer to ensure that we cover every detail. We're pleased, however, that the strategies that we're adopting are considered good practice, allow us to meet guidance, allow for the return of all pupils and allow for us to ensure a full curriculum delivery to pupils upon our return.

We will, of course, continue to release information and further details to parents and pupils in the weeks ahead but we wanted to ensure that you have clear insight into our thinking and our planning in response to the guidance.

Thank you for your ongoing support, it means a great deal to us all at a time when we're having to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances on behalf of our outstanding young people.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.
Principal.



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