

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

21st September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we enter the start of the 4th official week of term I just wanted to drop a note to families. I apologise in advance that much of this letter will be “operational” but hope that you appreciate the continued need for implementing measures to reduce the potential transmission of coronavirus still.

Firstly, I wanted to say a very large ‘Thank You’ for all of the support in re-opening the Academy to all students. I know for many families it was a big ask of trust to send your children back to school whilst the world around us is still dominated by coronavirus but across the first two days of term we saw 97% of our pupils come back through the Academy doors. To put it in perspective, average national attendance to school on a daily basis (pre-Covid) is just under 95% so achieving this figure really showed the support from our community and also the keenness from students to return to Bristol Met.

Students have been amazing in the maturity they have shown upon their return. As we communicated just before the start of term, we have had to make several changes to our usual operating systems; segregation of year groups at social times, one way systems, enhanced hygiene along with other changes and the students have risen to the challenge and really shown their understanding of the need for these changes. One day soon we hope to be able to return to our more usual way of working.

However, in the meantime, I need to ask for your support in speaking to your children about the need for some of the measures we are having to implement and how these apply out in the community as well as within the Academy. We continue to speak to students about the importance of these measures and feel that a united message will help with their deeper understanding:

Social distancing – I appreciate it is difficult for all of us to understand the different social distancing rules, especially within schools. Currently the Government guidance in order to fully reopen schools is that:

- a) Students within the **same** year group do not need to keep a particular distance apart. However, they should do everything they can to reduce physical contact with each other. That means no handshakes, high fives, hugs etc. They also shouldn't share drinks, packets of crisps etc. They should still, where possible, give each other as much space as possible which would particularly apply at social times where they can still socialise but keep distance between them where possible.
- b) Students of **different** year groups must keep 2m apart at all times unless they are ‘passing momentarily’. That would include lesson changeovers and other transition points. That is why we have implemented keep left and one way systems and are insisting that students don't stand around in the corridors waiting for friends during changeovers. This would apply to siblings as well as even though they are in the same household it would be too complicated for us to allow siblings to hang around with each other during social times.
- c) **All** students must keep 2m away from staff members as much as possible. We really appreciate this is difficult, it is difficult for staff as well as we are used to working closely with our students.
This measure is incredibly important. So far in schools who have had confirmed cases (including a number in Bristol) if the school has been able to demonstrate to Public Health England that the year group where there is a positive case confirmed have not been in prolonged close or physical contact with other year groups or staff then only the affected year group have had to isolate. If we are not able to demonstrate that (should a positive case be confirmed) then there is potential for multiple year groups, staff and/or even the entire Academy being closed again. I really do not want that and I don't think any of our families do given the large impact it has on families being able to continue

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

with their own work or daily roles. I really appreciate your support in speaking to students at home about why this measure is so crucial.

Rule of 6 – as you are likely aware, a new law came into effect last week which now makes it illegal for more than 6 people who do not live in the same household to come together socially. This is the case both inside and outside. Fortunately the law doesn't apply in education settings. However, it does apply once students have left the Academy at the end of the day. Whilst I fully understand that this will seem confusing for students (and us as adults) I don't want our students coming into conflict with authorities who have the job of enforcing the current laws. We are therefore asking students to leave site immediately at the end of the day and head straight home. They shouldn't be hanging around outside waiting for friends in different year groups (as this also then causes problems with the social distancing of bubbles) and they shouldn't be walking home or traveling in large groups. Again I appreciate your support in encouraging students to head straight home after school.

Symptoms of Coronavirus – we know from the first few weeks that families (and at times our own staff) are finding it difficult to navigate the decision of whether mild illness signs may be symptoms of coronavirus and whether that then means students need to get a test and families need to go into isolation whilst awaiting a test. We also know, as has been widely reported in the media, that access to tests have been frustrating.

The NHS articulate the 3 *common* symptoms of coronavirus infection to be:

- 1) Fever (towards 38 degrees and higher but no requirement to measure)
- 2) A new, continuous cough (coughing a lot, for more than one hour and also reported to normally be a very dry cough)
- 3) Anosmia (acute and sudden loss of taste or smell not associated with a bunged up nose)

As we enter the common cold season, with wetter weather and reduction in temperature, we thought it may be useful to highlight that current data suggests that people with coronavirus are deemed to *rarely* have:

- 1) Runny or stuffy/blocked nose
- 2) Sneezing
- 3) Fever
- 4) General aches and pains
- 5) Upset stomachs

Of course, as we all know, coronavirus is still a relatively new virus and new data is emerging all the time. If you are in any doubt that anyone in your household is displaying a symptom then you should follow the advice to self-isolate the entire household until a test is arranged and returns a negative result. If your child is a little under the weather but not displaying the common symptoms, and feels otherwise able to come to school, then they are welcome to. In general, so far, the data seems to suggest that if it looks and feels like the common cold then that is likely what it is.

Electric Scooters – this one is not related to coronavirus and is likely to cause some upset with a small number of our students. I apologise in advance if that is the case but hope you will understand our position. We have noticed that a number of students are now using an electric scooter to come to and from the Academy. Unfortunately, as you may or may not be aware, it is currently illegal to use these devices anywhere but private land. That means it is not legal to use them on roads, pavements or cycle lanes. That is because they are currently classed as PLEVs (personal light electric vehicles) and are therefore classed as a motor vehicle. That means they require the rider to have a provisional driving licence as a minimum, the vehicle must be insured for use on the road (which no one currently offers) and be roadworthy (have lights, indicators etc which are not found on most of the scooters). More information can be found on the [Gov website](#).

Unfortunately that means I must ask students to stop bringing them on to site as I cannot condone something which is effectively illegal for them to be doing. I also do not want them coming into potential conflict with authorities who have to enforce the current legislation. The Government are currently reviewing devices of this type and are running some controlled



HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

trials in some areas. If the legislation changes in the future then we will of course review our position. I hope you can understand our position on this and thank you in advance for your support.

SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) – Finally, there are new government requirements around the compulsory teaching of PSHE. Some new topics will now be taught around relationships and sex education. As always, these will be age appropriate for different year groups. Please consult the school website for further information or click on the below link and if you have any concerns and wish to discuss anything in more detail please do contact your child's Tutor in the first instance.

<https://bristolmetropolitanacademy.clf.uk/curriculum/pshe/>

Thank you for your continued support during these difficult times.

Yours sincerely and best wishes,

Mr C Shaw
Principal