

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

2nd November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I appreciate there have been no school days between my last letter and this one but given the continued developments over the October break, both locally and nationally, I wanted to update you on our current thought process and further changes that will be implemented in the Academy in order to continue to try and do our bit to suppress transmission rates of corona virus. This is a long letter so I apologise in advance. There is an audio version available at <https://youtu.be/DHYmwbGZN5Y>

Across last week I was involved in discussions across our trust, the Cabot Learning Federation, but also the local authority for education, Bristol City Council. Many families will have seen the Mayor's announcement to move Bristol locally into 'Tier 1+' during the half term break. Although not an official tier in the Government's structure this was an indication and acknowledgement of the rising cases of confirmed corona virus infection in the local area. We therefore explored, and ultimately agreed, that the time was right to move to more routine use of face coverings in education settings. Although the Government guidance is that this is not mandated until a local area moves into Tier 2 it seems appropriate to recognise the rapid increase in confirmed cases and move to this position. This has been agreed by many local secondary schools who will roll out the implementation of face coverings over the next week.

For Bristol Metropolitan Academy this means we are asking all students and staff *who are able* (which will be the majority) to begin to wear a face covering **whilst in communal areas**. This means as they arrive and move through the building, during lesson changeovers, during social times (when not actively eating/drinking) and as they move through the building to leave site. We are also asking students to continue to wear their covering until they actively leave the school grounds to assist with demarcation of being on site. Students will **not** have to wear a face covering when in a classroom or when engaged in PE lessons.

I absolutely appreciate that face coverings have been, and continue to be, a contentious issue in places. The science (or interpretation at least) and therefore guidance has changed several times since the start of 2020 which leads to confusion and difficulty in places of understanding the potential benefit v detriment for some people. I appreciate that for some families this will be welcome news and will think we should have moved to this position sooner. For many families you will be content that the time is now right. For some families this will be viewed as a negative and unnecessary step still. I simply want to assure our families that we, as a school, will continue to do what we are guided towards by the Government, Department for Education, Public Health England and South West, the local authority and our own Health and Safety Team to try and play our part using the information available each day to help reduce the transmission rates and to support a return to some form of normality as soon as possible. At all times we try to operate in the best interests of our community as a whole. I am asking for support from our students, staff, families and wider community in implementing this step. If your child is medically able, which is the majority, then please do support us in this request by ensuring they have a suitable covering (preferably a reusable fabric one that can be washed) and also preferably a small self seal bag (like a sandwich bag) for storing it securely in during times when it is not in use. We are trying to source some supplies ourselves for any students who genuinely are not able to source one or if they forget it on any given day. We will not be asking for any proof of exemption for students unable to wear a covering. We may make some contact with families where we have students not wearing one just to check that you are aware they are unable to wear one, please do not be offended by any contact.

Following on from that, and in a sense compounding this decision, was the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday evening of the move to a second national lockdown starting on Thursday and lasting until 2nd December 2020. We are awaiting the release of specific detail in regards any impact on educational settings and I will update you of anything relevant when it is received. The initial detail is clear that the current intention is that **all** schools will remain **fully open** to **all** year groups (accepting the continued potential for self-isolation of individuals, small groups and even potentially whole year group bubbles).

Since our return in September 2020 we have been working behind the scenes to ensure the ability to immediately move to the provision of work online for individuals/small groups and also for 'Live Lessons' if larger groups were unable to attend the Academy.



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An initial version of our 'Online Learning Plan' was circulated previously and is available in our "School Closure Learning" section of the website <https://bristolmetropolitanacademy.clf.uk/curriculum/school-closure-learning/> We will keep this section up to date with any changes.

Therefore, we expect and hope to welcome every student who is physically well enough to attend every day during the lockdown period. If your child is unwell or unable to attend for another reason please continue to communicate that to us each day using the absence line 0117 377 2071. Currently the guidance is that all students, even those with underlying health conditions or those that live with vulnerable people should continue to attend school.

Given the imminent lockdown situation I also wanted to ask again for support in speaking to your child(ren) about the importance of adhering to other measures of control once they exit the Academy, particularly at the end of the day. I appreciate it is particularly challenging for young people to understand that the rules inside the Academy are different to the rules outside which is why I ask for your support in reinforcing.

Once students leave the Academy at their allotted dismissal time they should be:

- Making their way off site immediately; **not** hanging around waiting for friends or other year groups. In situations where they are waiting for another member of their household to travel home together (sibling etc) they should arrange a suitable meeting point off site to reduce the density of students waiting around outside the Academy doors. Otherwise it negates everything we are doing in the Academy to reduce year group mixing and operate our 'bubbles'
- Stay a minimum of 1m away from everyone else outside of the household they live in, preferably aiming for 2m
- Travel to and from the Academy **either** with people they live with **or** with 1 other person. Whilst I appreciate this will be difficult when so many young people will be travelling from similar areas to the same destination across a relatively short time period it is something we need to highlight and work towards. Ultimately it will only be a concern where groups of young people are standing still. If groups are moving with purpose it will be clear that they are commuting and will not be a concern to any authorities I would not imagine.

The Government maintain a document for Parents/Carers regarding schools and education establishments in the current climate. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term> It is due to be updated shortly following Saturday's announcement.

Finally, just to reiterate again, we all want the same thing which is to do our bit to assist with reducing the transmission rate in the hope that all of us, but particularly our young people, can get some further freedoms returned as soon as possible. I will therefore finish by thanking all of our young people and you, as families, for the continued support you are giving the Academy as I appreciate that, much like the Government, we may not always be in agreement on the steps we are taking (too many or not enough) but you are always supporting us.

With best wishes,

Mr C Shaw
Principal