

22 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I thought it would be helpful to update you about a few issues before the half term holiday.

Possible on-site meetings for Year 10 and Year 12 pupils

The Government announced two weeks ago the expectation that Primary schools would open for Year 1 and 6 pupils from the 1st June 2020. At the same time the following announcement appeared in a very low key way in one paragraph of the DfE guidance:

“From 1 June 2020, we expect that secondary schools and colleges will be able to offer some face to face contact with year 10 and year 12 pupils. This will not be a return to full timetables or pupils back in school or college full time, rather some support to supplement pupils’ remote education.”

No further detail was given and no guidance as to what this means has since appeared.

You will have seen in the media that the issue of opening schools has been the subject of much debate and speculation nationally – entirely relating to primary schools. The issue of safety of pupils and staff has been central to this as has the concept of how far social distancing can be achieved in a school setting. This debate continues between teacher’s professional associations, local authorities and the Department for Education and currently further guidance is promised by the Government. This includes advice on safe opening and scientific evidence about the ongoing risks of infection compared with the value of pupils being back in school. No agreement has currently been reached

We have viewed it as essential that we consider this issue in relation to the possibilities of some in-school provision for groups of Year 10 and Year 12 pupils. We have had detailed discussions with and taken advice from parent groups, staff, teacher’s professional representatives from Hackney and the Skinners’ Academy staff representatives, the governing body and the Hackney Learning Trust.

We have drawn up five options for how we might achieve some limited return to school-based meetings together with a risk assessment about the protection of staff and pupils from possible infection. We have put the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff at the heart of our decision making.

We have concluded that we are **not** currently in a position to offer any return to school based work for these two year groups from 1st June. We will see what emerges nationally from the Government and from teacher’s representatives over the coming week, what further guidance is made available by the Department for Education and how far the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff can be assured. This is a decision that rests with the Principal based on the specific needs of the Academy and taking due regard of advice from a number of sources, including parents and Governors. As soon as we are able to, after 1st June, we will finalise plans and communicate these with you.

Online study materials and tasks and home working

There are currently no plans to reopen the Academy for the majority of Year groups and it is likely that offsite working will continue at least until the end of the Summer Term. We are constantly evaluating how we provide work and give feedback on it and we have taken comments from a wide range of parents seriously. We are

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starting to make changes based on feedback and to introduce a wider range of learning opportunities including some direct teaching via video calls.

Updated guidance around online learning and support for home learning will be published on the Academy website and sent out to you within the coming week. Our aim is to support pupils with both a safe and settled environment, but also one that provides for their long-term development. We trust in our staff to make up for lost time when pupils eventually return. Advisors in different year groups will be starting to make regular contact with pupils in their advisory group but key ways in which parents can support learning from home are:

- Regular sleeping pattern in line with a normal school day
- Ensuring pupils are working, with breaks/ other activities balanced
- Ensure that pupils are checking school email and SMHW (by logging in) **every** day
- Submitting **all work with a comment** to the teacher so that they can receive the most appropriate feedback
- Emailing their Advisors regularly (both to receive feedback but also to check in with any general queries, questions or support)

Guidance for parents of secondary age pupils on supporting home learning has just been released by the Department for Education.

This is the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-secondary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Grading of GCSE and A level results

Although this is an issue that applies specifically to Year 11 and Year 13, I thought it would be helpful to update all parents about this process.

This is what we are required to use as the basis for grade recommendations to be submitted to relevant examination boards for each pupil/student:

- A grade per pupil/student
- A rank order for each pupil/student that has the same grade within a centre

This puts a lot of responsibility on subject staff as grade predictions and rankings must '*reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the **most likely** grade a student **would have** achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment*' (Ofqual , 3rd April 2020).

At no point are we **awarding** grades to pupils/students. We are **recommending** estimated grades based on all of our available evidence up to 20th March 2020. Examination boards will **award** grades after moderating and finalising the recommendations for individual pupils in each subject.

This has required a massive amount of work by Heads of subject departments and subject staff together with co-ordination by the Senior Leadership Team. The first stage has been completed and the next stage involves using an external agency to check the figures and ensure that grades are consistent with the pattern of the last three years. I am then required to check and sign off the whole exercise and forward to examination boards in the first two weeks in June

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We are required to make sure that any grades and/or rank order are not shared or discussed at any stage with pupils/students, parents or carers or anyone else outside the Academy.

Results will be released on **13th August 2020** for A and AS level and **20th August 2020** for GCSE exactly as they would have been if examinations had taken place.

I will be writing to pupils/students and parents in Years 11 and 13 after the half term holiday to explain the support and advice we will be providing for the next stages of education.

Half term holiday arrangements

The Academy closes on 22nd May and reopens on Monday 1st June. There will be no on-site provision for key worker and other identified children during the holiday. Staff are not expected to provide online work during the holiday but some might continue with this on a voluntary basis by arrangement with their pupils.

And – thank you!

I'd just like to express my deep appreciation and that of all the staff of the Academy for your continued support and involvement during the lockdown. This has been of enormous value to us in leading and managing a wide range of aspects in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that your children, our pupils, thrive and continue to make progress as much as possible in the circumstances we all find ourselves in.

With warmest regards,



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