



Dear Parent/Carer

I am delighted to be able to inform you of our plans to welcome our new Year 7's into school on a full-time basis from September.

Year 7 will start on Tuesday 8th September at 8.15am, Year 8 and Year 9 will join us on Wednesday 9th September, Year 10 and Year 11 on Thursday 10th September, Year 13 on Friday 11th September and the new Year 12 will start on Monday 14th September.

This will allow Year 7 a chance to settle in to their new school before everyone arrives and ensure they are fully inducted into the new systems with regards to remaining safe at school.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts in becoming co-educators over the past few months. I know that juggling home-schooling with everything else has been really difficult and I applaud you for supporting the remote learning programme that your primary school provided. Successful education is about partnerships and only by school and family working in harmony can we be successful. Many thanks for your patience and resilience.

I recognise that you will have mixed emotions about your child returning to full-time education and this letter aims to alleviate any concerns you may have, I apologise for the length of the letter but there is a lot to communicate in terms of the changes we have to make in order to be safe when we open. A full risk assessment will be available to view on the school website from the beginning of September. However, this letter outlines the main arrangements of which you need to be aware. I would also encourage you to visit the government website gov.uk/backtoschool for further information on how to stay safe.

Whilst it will feel different to what it would have been like in September and there are many restrictions on what we are able to do within the regulations, I am sure that we will all adapt quickly and in particular recognise that, even within these limitations, it is better for everyone that all students can come back to school full-time. We are all very much looking forward to welcoming our new Year 7 into school, reconnecting our wonderful school community and getting back to teaching and learning. I know that starting a new school can be worrying but it is even more challenging for students this year as they have not had the opportunity to visit in the last weeks of term. However, I want to assure you that we will be doing everything we can to support students and help them to settle in and enjoy the move to Mark Rutherford School.

I know you will have many questions and as far as I can I will attempt to answer them in this letter. However, please do also consult our website www.markrutherford.beds.sch.uk

The main aims for these arrangements are:

- to provide a full curriculum with all students in school studying all subjects
- support students to adjust to being back in school and to build on the learning they have done during lockdown
- to limit the risks of infection spreading within school by:
 - ✓ creating 'a bubble' of each year group to limit the number of different people students are mixing with during the school day
 - ✓ reducing the number of areas and pieces of equipment that students will be in contact with during each day
 - ✓ practising Covid-safe precautions such as sanitising, hand washing and social distancing where possible

We expect all students to be able to attend but if any student shows any symptoms of Covid 19 or someone in their household does, they should remain at home and school should be informed. Similarly if any child shows symptoms within school, they will be safely housed in a medical room and home contacted so they can be collected. The school will then inform Public Health England (or the new organisation that replaces it) and follow the procedures needed for testing, tracking and tracing (see the attached flowchart for guidance on this, please note that this has not been updated since July and the recommended isolation period if symptoms develop is now a minimum of 10 days).

The start of the day

Students will not be able to access the school site until 8.15 am. There will be no breakfast service and Year 7 will be directed to a year group social area. They should enter the site via the entrance near the Bike shed – as they are the only year group on day one, we will take them through this so they are ready for day 2. On their first day we ask that they line up on the Tennis Courts nearest the roadside and we will support from there until they get to know the school.

During the first days back we will talk to the students about the rules set out below and walk them through the school so they become accustomed to the new procedures, behaviour policy and walk ways.

Equipment

In order to limit the risk of infection spreading through the sharing of equipment we ask that all students ensure that they have as a minimum:

- A black or blue pen
- A green or purple pen
- A 30 cm ruler
- A pencil, eraser and pencil sharpener
- A highlighter
- A glue stick
- Set of coloured pencils
- A scientific calculator

Students should expect to carry their exercise books with them unless they are asked to hand them in for marking. It would also be useful for students to carry their own tissues although there will be supplies in every classroom (if they have to cough or sneeze to Catch It, Kill It, Bin It). Hand sanitiser will be available in all classrooms but some students may also wish to have their own supply.

School Dress / Uniform

All students are expected to wear full school uniform and school PE kit, except for the school tie in the first instance. In order to avoid having to use changing rooms, students are asked to wear their PE kit to school when they have PE or Dance on their timetables. On day one all students should arrive in full uniform except for the tie.

Avoiding close contact – safety within lessons and moving around the building

The full 2m social distancing will not be possible in school. However, we can still minimise close contact.

- Students should not touch other students or staff
- Teachers will try to maintain a 2m distance where possible.
- Seating plans will be established and students will stay in the same seat when in that room.
- Students should try not to go to the toilet in lesson times and where possible, use the toilets near their own year group social area
- Classrooms will be organised in rows with the teacher at the front wherever possible
- An 'Up Down, In Out' system will be in place inside the school and students should always walk on the left.

Curriculum Adjustments

- Practical activities in Science and Technology will be by teacher demonstration only.
- In all lessons group activities requiring face-to-face working will be avoided
- Group singing will not be allowed and neither will the sharing of musical instruments
- All IT equipment will be sanitised after use
- In PE, contact sports will not be allowed and lessons will take place outdoors wherever possible.
- Students are asked to come to school in their PE kit on the days they have PE or Dance to avoid the use of changing rooms
- SEND support will continue as normal but with no mixing of year groups

General hygiene

Students will be expected to sanitise their hands on entry to school and dispose of any masks they have worn on public transport. The government has stated that the wearing of masks is not necessary in school but we will allow staff and students to wear them if they choose to do so.

Hand sanitiser and tissues will be available in all classrooms. We will be explaining to students some changes in the behaviour policy in relation to what we expect them to do to stay safe. Considering the very serious consequences of not staying safe the sanctions for any misbehaviour in relation to this will be clearly shared with students.

Parents coming into school for meetings

If possible arrange to speak to staff by telephone or video conferencing. If you do need to come into school in person, you must book an appointment so that a safe space can be provided. Please do not come to school without an appointment as you will not be able to see anybody.

Break and Lunchtime

Students will remain in their year groups during morning and lunchtime break in the specified social areas, should the weather be inclement, we have designated inside areas for each year group. There will be no provision for food or drink from the canteen except for free school meal children who will be encouraged to pre-order a grab and go lunch and we will inform each year group of collection points for their lunch. All other students should bring their own water and lunch. Facilities are available to replenish water if needed. Please remember that energy drinks are banned in school.

Extra-curricular offer

When we first reopen in September there will be no extra-curricular offer but we hope to be able to continue offering a range of extra-curricular activities within a short space of time. These will be limited to single year groups at any one session. Further details of our extra-curricular offer will be provided during September.

End of the school day

Due to the shortened lunch time, the school day will finish early and we will stagger the exit of students:

Year 7 will leave at 2.35 pm. All students will leave by the gate they entered. The school transport service have been made aware of the earlier finishing time.

Transport

We ask that wherever possible students walk, bike or are brought to school by car. During the current crisis students should attempt to avoid public transport, if they do travel on public transport they should wear a mask and carry a bag to put the mask in as they arrive to school or dispose of it carefully in a bin on arrival. On school buses students are advised to wear a mask. We will be putting students into seating plans on the school bus that reflect their year group bubbles. This will be done on the first day of their return. In order to keep their place on the school bus students must follow the seating plan rules and safety measures.

Re-adjusting to school life and rebuilding our community

During week 1, students will spend a little bit more time than normal in form groups, reflecting on their experiences of lockdown and remote learning and preparing for the new way that school is going to be organised. It is important that we take time to connect with each other and ensure we all feel safe and comfortable back in school before getting into specific subject learning.

To help with this process we would encourage all students to bring some work or project that they have completed at home of which they are proud, this will form the basis of some work in week one and contribute to a form display board in each room celebrating our students achievements during lockdown.

In subject lessons during weeks 1 and 2 we will take time to find out what students have learnt during lockdown so that we can adjust our curriculum and lessons accordingly. This doesn't mean students will face a barrage of tests and there will be no data collections or reporting of scores, grades or levels to begin with. Instead our teachers will use a range of methods to assess students' readiness for the next stage of learning in each subject

I am looking forward to welcoming our new Year 7 in September, be it in rather different circumstances and wish all the best for what is left of the summer break.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Julie Bloor
Headteacher
Mark Rutherford School