

17th September 2020

Dear Families,

Re: Post-lockdown procedures and updates

We are nearly another week into the Autumn term, and I would like to once again thank all of our families for understanding the challenges we have had to deal with because of the current coronavirus pandemic. This week, students arrived at and left school at the new staggered times, as well as wearing face coverings in the communal areas of the school buildings with no fuss as they adapted to the changes – they really are amazing! Over the coming weeks, there will be further tweaks and changes and I have no doubt that our students will continue to be the resilient individuals they are and continue to thrive in school. Any decision we make will be to mitigate risks from coronavirus, as well as being mindful of the change in weather which will affect break and lunchtime arrangements.

Break and lunchtime arrangements

As you will be aware, our canteen is currently closed and students are using the field, courtyard and other seating areas around the school site so that they can stay in year group bubbles, in line with government guidance. As we move into the winter months, the field will no longer be open as it will be muddy and it is unlikely current restrictions with regards to year group bubbles will be lifted before the weather improves. As we will not be able to use the canteen as we have done in previous years due to its small size, students will be able to use the indoor areas of the various buildings, as they have always done, during wet days. More information on this will follow in due course once we have had further discussions on the logistics of this.

The catering team are also looking to serve hot food again from the year group bubble food huts before half term – we know how much our students love their cooking so this is very exciting news! There will be a range of food options including ‘food to go’ meal deals that our students can enjoy.

We understand that there was a Facebook thread yesterday evening that garnered some debate on our lunchtime arrangements during the pandemic. I would like to thank everybody who showed us support and who understand that the decisions we are making are to protect everybody in the best way we can during the pandemic. As ever, if you have any suggestions that we can implement and would keep our community safe, we would be delighted to hear them. Unfortunately, having 1200 seats with tables outdoors on the field is not feasible as much as we would like for it to be, even if they were to fold up!

During lockdown, we were able to provide 35 extra benches (our site team had to make these due to the lockdown backlog from suppliers) and we have another 15 benches arriving today (90 extra seats with 15 benches alone). Break and lunchtime arrangements have been the same for many years and our students are usually very pleased to have the opportunity to stretch their legs after sitting down in lessons or have a picnic on the grass when the weather is pleasant. If students would like to be outside and it is drizzling, as usual, they are allowed to wear their coats.

Teams

All classes have now been set up on Teams and staff have been asked to upload resources/have live lessons/use the chat function where appropriate. Although we started having Teams lessons during lockdown, staff are trying their best to adapt to this new way of working again by having a class in front of them while catering for those who may be isolating at home. There have been a couple of hiccups, but we are working with the IT teams to rectify those issues as quickly as possible. If there are any problems, please contact main.bbs@taw.org.uk or your child’s small school.



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Presently, we still have Show My Home Work (SMHW) as well as Teams for our online learning. Year 8 to 11 families will remember we started lockdown only having SMHW and set up Teams very quickly from scratch to enhance the teaching and learning of our students. As a result, we were able to deliver considerably more face to face lessons for our students and in all year groups, not just year 10 when schools 're-opened'. Our aim is to move to one system in the future and we strongly believe that using Teams is the way forward. We have chosen Teams as it will help prepare our young people for the world of work. Gradually, we will be using SMHW less and less until we move completely to Teams. The plan is to move completely over to Teams by the end of this academic year at the very latest.

Masks/Face Coverings

I would like to say a huge thank you to all families for making the change to mandatory facemasks in communal indoor areas a success. Nearly every single one of our students have been to school every day this week with a face covering and we have been able to provide masks to those who did not have one.

Now that all students are in the habit of wearing a face covering, it will be part of our uniform until further notice. Any student who does not have a valid reason to not wear one (e.g. those who are exempt and have a card) will have their standards card signed, as they would do if they do not wear their uniform correctly. Once again, this decision has been made to keep our community safe and there have been a number of comments from families, staff and students to say that they/their children feel much more confident when moving around the building now. I am also aware that there will be families who do not believe in wearing a face covering, so I want to thank you and let you know that I am incredibly grateful that you are supporting us with this.

Running a school with the additional challenges the pandemic has brought has certainly been difficult. However, I would like to extend my thanks to all of you for your support and help in making it that little bit easier!

Yours sincerely,



Krissi Carter
Principal

