



14 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

As we come to the end of this very unusual Autumn Term, I wanted to write to you with some updates and information about next term. Our staff and students have responded brilliantly to the challenges of Covid and I would like to thank you for your support and for the kind comments we have received about our robust Covid safety procedures. These arrangements will continue for the foreseeable future.

Parent Meetings

We will be holding our first online parents' evening on Thursday 17 December for parents of students in Years 11-13 and we look forward to meeting parents at this virtual event. All parents of students in these year groups should have received information about how to book an online appointment with their child's teachers. Some parents have raised questions about the video call. To confirm, parents can choose to activate their camera for the video call or the camera can be switched off if they prefer. There has also been the opportunity to book an online 'Introduction to the Principal' meeting and I am looking forward to meeting more parents over the coming week, albeit virtually. We intend to hold parents' evenings for Years 7 – 10 in the Spring Term and will inform you of these dates early in the Spring Term.

Students continue to apply themselves well to their work and we have been particularly impressed by the determined way in which our Year 13 and 11 students have approached their mock examinations in recent weeks. Our curriculum continues to develop, and we are receiving excellent support from United Learning Directors to help us to improve further.

A' Level and GCSE examinations in 2021

You will be aware from recent press reports that the government has now confirmed that A'Level and GCSE examinations will take place next year and have announced some new measures which include:

- Students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE and A' Levels to focus revision
- Exam aids – like formula sheets – provided in some examinations to reduce the amount of information students need to memorise
- Additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams are missed due to illness or self-isolation.

There will be more information about this available to schools in January. Given the disruption to teaching last year, as well as the likelihood of further disruption this year, we feel that these steps announced by the government will help students feel more confident about their exams. They are also an important development in making the system as fair as possible in the circumstances.

Exams will take place slightly later than usual with most examinations taking place between 7 June – 2 July 2021. There may be some examinations scheduled before 7 June and we remind parents of Year 13 and Year 11 students not to make any family commitments during the examination period.

End of Term Arrangements

As you will be aware, schools across the country have been playing a key role in the government's Test and Trace programme helping to identify any close contacts of individuals within their school communities who have tested positive for Covid-19. Given that people with Covid can be infectious for several days before they start showing symptoms, schools will need to continue carrying out this role into the holidays. As such, in order to ensure no school staff need to work over the Christmas period (i.e. from Christmas Eve), the government has proposed that schools put in place an extra staff training day on Friday 18 December so that students do not need to attend that day. Therefore, we will close to students on Thursday 17 December at the usual time.

Start of Term Arrangements

The academy will reopen to students on Tuesday 5 January 2021. The start and end times of the school day for each year group are outlined below:

Year Group	Start Time	End Time
Year 7	8.20 am	2.50 pm
Year 8	8.25 am	3.00 pm
Year 9	8.35 am	3.05 pm
Year 10	8.40 am	3.10 pm
Year 11	8.30 am	3.15 pm
Sixth Form	8.15 am for P1 or after 9.00am	2.50 pm if no period 4 or after 3.20 pm

You will note that we have made some minor changes to the start and end times of the school day to support students' learning and well-being. We are moving tutor time to the start of the day and re-introducing set tutor groups for all years to ensure all students have a focused and structured start to the school day with their tutor. The end of the day has been lengthened slightly for students in Years 10 and 11 to make up for some of the lost learning time in option subjects over this term.

Preparing your child for the Spring Term – uniform and equipment

Although the weather has become colder, open windows and/or doors for ventilation remain an essential way to defend ourselves against the virus. Our classroom areas are heated but inevitably lose heat when windows or doors are left open. Please support us by ensuring that your child is dressed appropriately for the colder weather in correct academy uniform which currently includes a face mask. We strongly encourage your child to wear layers of clothing such as a plain white vest/t shirt under their school shirt, jumper and blazer and that they have a warm, waterproof coat for their journey to and from school. We remind parents of our uniform expectations [here](#). **Please make sure your child arrives at school in correct uniform with their face mask (unless exempt) after the Christmas break. It is important for you to note that hoodies are NOT permitted either as outdoor coats or worn under blazers in place of a jumper. Also, black trainers are NOT permitted as school shoes.**

The equipment your child requires for his/her lessons is listed [here](#). We ask that parents make sure their child is properly prepared for their lessons at the start of term. Christmas is of course a good time for gifts of stationery such as pens, pencils, rulers, etc!



We would also ask parents to remind their child about their conduct on the way to and from school. As an ambassador for NOA, we expect student behaviour to reflect our high expectations.

Reporting Positive Covid19 Cases over the Christmas Holidays

We hope that everyone remains well over the Christmas break. If your child tests positive for Covid between 17 and 23 December, you should notify us at covid-19@northoxfordshire-academy.org as soon as possible. Within your e-mail, please state when your child became symptomatic. If your child tests positive having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school (i.e. the evening of Saturday 19 December onwards), the school will not need to take any action but you will need to follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.

Severe Weather Arrangements

As we enter the colder months, it is timely to send out a reminder to parents about arrangements in case of severe weather this Winter. The academy will remain open in all but exceptional circumstances. However, on days when snowfall/icy road conditions mean there is a risk to student and staff safety, the school may be forced to close. Information about school closure will be posted on our website by 7.30 am and parents will also be informed by text message and email.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year.

We look forward to welcoming your child back to school on Tuesday 5 January 2020.

Yours sincerely

Alison Merrills
Principal