

27 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to introduce myself and to give you some information regarding our return to school in September.

You will know that after 5 amazing years at Co-op Academy Leeds, Mr Mitchell is leaving to start a new challenge at Netherthwood Academy in Barnsley. I thank him for all of the work that he has done during that 5 years and know that many of you have expressed your gratitude to him directly for the work that he has done in raising standards at the academy. I wish him all the very best of luck in his new school and know that he will have the same impact there as he has here.

I am incredibly excited to be joining Co-op Academy Leeds in September. I have met all of the staff at the school and some of the students. I look forward to meeting you all soon.

I have provided some details below around how things have to change when the academy re-opens in a few weeks. Our first priority has to be the safety of everyone who comes to the academy and we have done a lot of work in preparation for our return in September to minimise the risks of viral infection. Given the pace and regularity of changes in guidance provided by the DfE, there is a chance that some of what we are currently proposing to do will need to be adapted to comply with the most recent requirements. I will keep you informed of any changes as they happen over the summer.

Starting dates

Monday 7 September

The first day of term will be an INSET day, during which staff will be brought up-to-date on all the new arrangements for bringing students back into the building.

Tuesday 8 September	Year 7 will have Meet the Tutor appointments. Separate information will be sent out explaining this.
Wednesday 9 September	Year 7 will be in school following their timetable. There will be some induction and transitions events happening, and they will be getting used to rules and regulations. Year 11 will also return to school.
Thursday 10 September	Year 7 will arrive at 8.40 and follow their timetable Year 11 will arrive at 8.25 and follow their timetable. Year 8 – arrival at 9.00am Year 9 – arrival at 10.00am Year 10 – arrival at 11.00am
Friday 11 September	

All students will be in school according to their staggered start times, as follows:
Year 7 – 8.40; Year 8 – 8.30; Year 9 – 8.20; Year 10 – 8.30; Year 11 – 8.20

Year groups will leave each day according to their new timetable at the following times:
Year 7 – 2.35; Year 8 – 2.25; Year 9 – 2.35; Year 10 – 2.25; Year 11 – 2.45

Uniform

Students will be expected to attend school in full, standard uniform, as per the published uniform policy. The one exception will be for students who have PE on a given day, in which case, we ask that students come to school in their PE kit. Students will be permitted to wear this for the whole day, rather than risk breaches of distancing in changing rooms before and after the lesson.

Arrival at school

Each year group has a different start time and a different entrance to the site and the building. We politely ask that students stick, wherever possible, to these start times, to prevent overcrowding on the way into the site. We also encourage parents to refrain from entering the site, including on foot, unless a specific meeting has been arranged with a member of staff.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to hold breakfast club before school in the first few weeks. As soon as we are able to do this safely, we will communicate with students and parents.

We are hoping to be able to provide a snack for those students who become hungry during the longer morning session, and we will review arrangements as the term progresses.

Zoning arrangements

On entering the building at their specific entry point, students will have their temperature taken and then are required to head straight for their learning zone. In most cases, students

will be grouped in forms and taught in the same classroom for the whole day. There will be a small number of exceptions to this, for example PE lessons which will, weather permitting, take place outside the building and not involve excessive use of equipment. At Key Stage 4, there will be some movement around classrooms for option subjects. We hope to re-introduce practical specialist teaching in Key Stage 3 once we have gauged how the revised arrangements are progressing.

Break-time

Students will take a break-time of 20 minutes in their zone, supervised by academy pastoral staff. They will be allowed to remain in their teaching space during this break. There can be no canteen food service at break-time because of the need to ensure Year Groups are not mixing, and the regulations around appropriate distancing.

Lunchtime

Lunchtime will be a 30-minute slot, one or two year groups at a time, in two separate locations. This will be available in the canteen and the main hall, although we encourage students who are able to do so to bring a packed lunch to minimise queuing. This is a major change to the normal way of working, and we will need to review this arrangement over the first couple of weeks to see whether we can improve what is on offer.

Equipment

The government guidance recommends that students do not share equipment, to prevent as much as possible the risk of infection. We are therefore asking that, where possible, all students come to school equipped with a pen, pencil, ruler and rubber. If equipment has to be bought on the day, this will be available in their zones.

Keeping safe and clean

Each zone will have its own suite of toilets and hand-washing facilities, to be used only by students from the relevant bubble. Sanitiser will be placed in every room and this must be used when entering and leaving the classroom. To avoid students queuing for toilets, we will allow students, within reason, to stagger their visits. This arrangement will be reviewed when restrictions are eased, as we do not wish to disrupt learning in the long-term.

Hand-washing will need to be done properly, with soap, and for at least 20 seconds. If your son / daughter needs to “refresh” how to wash their hands effectively, we would urge you to ensure they are in the habit before returning to school. We will be providing some initial support in the first session back to ensure everyone knows how to do what they can to remain hygienic in school.

Public transport (buses)

The regulations currently state that anyone travelling on public transport must wear a mask. If a student arriving on public transport has not adhered to this requirement, we will contact you to inform you and then make decisions on whether they are to remain in school or to return home. In any case, we will contact you to discuss before making any decision. We are encouraging as many students as possible to walk or cycle to school if this is possible.

Work opportunities

We will continue to provide home learning electronically going forward to minimise the risk of infection. In class, we will be doing everything we can to plug the gaps in learning which will have opened up during the lengthy period of closure. This will not be easy, but the task will be made easier if all students attend school.

We will be adapting our approach to disruptive students from September, and whilst restrictions are in place, so that any disruption has as little impact on the rest of the class as possible. Each zone of the academy will have its own removal room, although we hope these will not be required often. It is my genuine hope that students who have previously shown significant disruption will acknowledge the value that being in education full-time brings, and that they grasp this opportunity to hit the “re-set” button. Whilst my personal ethos is one of total inclusion and equal opportunity, I will not allow persistently disruptive students to de-rail the academy’s efforts to bring about sustained and significant improvement or to put the health and safety of others at risk. I would be very grateful if you would impress upon your child the need for them to comply with academy rules and regulations and support staff and other students to recover their lost learning.

What will happen if there is a reported COVID-19 infection

Please make sure you are following all the updated guidance from the government about staying safe and well during the summer months, so you are aware of your responsibilities should your child or anyone else in your household present symptoms of COVID-19. We will be tracking very carefully all students, staff and visitors, so we can communicate effectively with everyone if this happens.

Otherwise, the government has confirmed that attendance at school is mandatory for all students unless there are special circumstances. I hope I can count on your support to ensure your child attends school every day, to catch up as quickly as possible on every lost learning opportunity.

Mental health and anxiety support

The return to school will inevitably be a time of great stress and anxiety for many: students, parents and staff members. As we all adjust to this new way of working, issues will arise. We hope to be able to react quickly when this is the case, and we want to work in partnership with parents and students to get things right for everyone.

Academy staff will be on hand whenever possible to address the needs of students who are struggling with the return, but if you have any concerns over the first few weeks, you are encouraged to contact the pastoral team for support.

Data Collection

Many thanks to those parents/carers who have taken the time to complete the on-line form, informing us of all relevant details (address/telephone number etc). It is vital that school have up to date information before September so I would urge everyone to take 5 minutes to complete this information. A link to the form is on our website – leeds.coopacademies.co.uk.

And finally

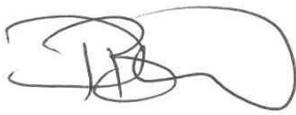
For parents of students returning to Co-op Academy Leeds, I totally understand your anxiety around closing any gaps that may exist due to absence from school. Students will have missed their friends, their teachers and the feeling of belonging which being part of a community brings. Others, despite working hard during lockdown, are panicking that they will not be as prepared as they could be for their GCSEs next summer. They have also forgotten what it is like to be in school, with its routines and expectations.

We have planned for this and I am confident we will identify issues and correct them quickly – it is what we do. We will have assessments in Maths and English and will assess reading levels to ensure that all pupils are back on track as quickly as possible.

I will finish by thanking everyone for their resilience and patience during this most troubling of times. Whilst there is still much much uncertainty, I hope we have provided some assurance that the academy and its leaders have done everything possible to get things back up and running safely and effectively.

Have a wonderful and hopefully stress-free summer.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PB', enclosed within a large, loopy, hand-drawn oval shape.

Paul Brockwell
Principal Designate

