

28 August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your families are well and have had some opportunity to rest over the summer. I wanted to write to you with a few updates before term starts again next week. I am delighted to say that our Governing Body and the Trust Board have approved our strategy for opening, along with the other schools in the Alban Academies Trust.

During the holidays, I have continued to review the government guidance and thought it might be helpful to remind you of the details I sent out at the end of last term, as well as inform our new parents/carers of our plans for opening in a COVID secure manner.

For the time-being the school day will look and feel a little different; we will all be expected to follow a number of new routines, and there will unfortunately be a certain amount of limitation on some aspects of our wider curriculum. However, I want to reassure you that ensuring your children are happy and engaged is our main priority. All our staff will be here to support your children, and reassure them as they come through our gates.

Plans for returning to school in September

Thursday 3 September - Year 7 and Year 12 only (first day on school site)

- Year 7 students should arrive on site at the normal time of 8.25am and enter via the gate nearest Reception on Herns Lane. Members of staff will be on duty outside school at 8.25am. Students will be dismissed at the usual time of 2.55pm
- Year 12 students should arrive on site at 9.30am and will finish at 12.30pm

Friday 4 September - all year groups return for induction

- Year 7 students should arrive on site at the normal time of 8.25am and will finish at 2.55pm
- Year 8 students should arrive on site at 9.45am and will leave at 11.45am
- Year 9 students should arrive on site at 11.10am and will leave at 1.10pm
- Year 10 and Year 11 students should arrive on site at 12.15pm and will leave at 2.15pm
- Year 12 students should arrive on site 11.30am and will leave at 1pm
- Year 13 students should arrive on site at 9.00am and will leave at 1pm

The school has allocated 4 entry points for students:

- Year 7 will enter via the gate nearest Reception on Herns Lane
- Year 8 via the gate near H block/Student Services on Herns Lane
- Year 9 via the Sports Centre gates
- Year 10 and 11 via the gate at the rear of the playing fields. Year 10 and 11 will assemble on Attimore playground using the markers to line up in tutor groups
- Year 12 and 13 students may enter the school via any of the entry points

Site Security

To further protect students on site and control unplanned visitors to the school site, automated security gates have been installed at the two entrances on Herts Lane over the summer. From September, parents/carers and other visitors will not be given access to the school site without a pre-booked appointment. Students arriving by car should be dropped safely outside school. There will be no vehicle access to the school site for parents. We would ask that you do not attend school to bring lunches or equipment that students have forgotten. These items will not be accepted to minimise the possibility of infection.

Equipment needed in September

Students MUST bring in their essential daily items including:

- A waterproof bag with the capacity to hold A4 sized exercise books
- Their own pencil case with black pens, a green pen, pencils, ruler, eraser and sharpener **along with colouring pencils, scissors and glue stick**
- Their own scientific calculator
- Their own water bottle
- Their own hand sanitiser
- PE Kit: PE lessons will be running from September and students must wear their PE kit to school on the days which they have PE lessons
- Padlock: If your child wishes to have a locker, they will need to provide a padlock for their locker. These are available on a first come, first served basis

Due to restrictions on cash handling, students will no longer be able to purchase stationery items in school

Every child will be following a full timetable and learning a full curriculum. Your child will receive specialist teaching in every subject.

Lunch and cashless catering

The lunch break from September will be 50 minutes; with two staggered lunchtimes. Each year group bubble will have access to a catering area serving hot and/or cold food. We will be using the cashless catering system and students will be asked to sanitise their hands after they have made payment and before eating to ensure healthy and safe hand hygiene. Due to government guidelines, our catering provider is not able to accept cash payments, so it is essential that all parents/carers set up a Wisepay account. Payment for food must be made via Wisepay, therefore it is important that parents/carers check the balance regularly. Please do not give your child cash which they will be unable to use in school. If you have any difficulties setting up your Wisepay account, please contact the Finance team:

Finance@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk

Toilet breaks and refilling water bottles

All toilet facilities will be cleaned regularly throughout the day. Toilet breaks will be limited to break and lunch times unless for medical reasons. Staff will be monitoring the movement of students around the school during lesson time and change overs and ask that toilet breaks are not taken during this time so we can maximise time in the classroom. Water fountains are to be used during break times to refill bottles. Where possible, water bottles should be large enough to last all day.

Other changes

Teachers will continue to comply with 2m social distancing and will therefore remain as much as possible at the front of the classroom. Students in each year group will be able to socialise with their peers during break and lunch time as each year group will be in dedicated social areas. Students will be regularly asked to sanitise their hands, including when they arrive onsite. A one-way system has been introduced and will be used where appropriate to ensure students and staff can move around the school site safely. Posters are present in all areas of the school to remind students to apply the 2m social distancing rules. Posters and sanitising stations are present in all blocks continually promoting positive hygiene. Lunch and break times will be supervised and staff will be requesting that large groups do not gather. This is intended to keep students safe. They may find it frustrating at first, but please help them realise we have their best interests at heart. Students must attend school with all their own equipment. Students will be responsible for looking after and carrying their own exercise books. Classrooms will be rearranged in accordance with Government guidance and desks, where possible, will be in rows and facing forwards.

This week the government announced that if there were local lockdown measures in place in a particular area, that face coverings would be mandatory in schools in confined areas and corridors. At the time of writing we are not in this position and therefore the wearing of face coverings will not be mandatory at Ridgeway. If students and staff wish to, they may choose to wear a face mask in the corridor or in Attimore Hall.

Face masks will not be worn in lessons. Students do not need to wear face masks when moving between lessons or in communal areas. We have decided to allow students to wear face masks if they choose to do so because they are particularly vulnerable or anxious (or someone in their immediate family is), but under strict conditions in line with scientific advice:



1. The mask is worn correctly the entire time (see diagram and attached poster).
2. Masks may only be worn when using corridors or other common areas e.g. Attimore Hall
3. Masks should not be worn in the classroom or any practical lesson. Masks must be removed if instructed by a member of staff.
4. When not in use masks should be placed in a sealable hygienic plastic bag.
5. Masks must not contain any offensive text/pictures and ideally be plain, changed daily and taken home for disposal or replacement. Bandanas and similar coverings are not permitted.

Symptoms and self-isolation

The Government's advice regarding symptoms remains unchanged. If your child displays any of the following symptoms they should isolate for 7 days and the household should isolate for 14 days. Please follow the school's absence reporting procedures.

- A high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- A new and continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours

Students and their families are eligible for Covid-19 testing. This can be accessed via the NHS website.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>

Please contact the school immediately if a member of your household tests positive. To support the Government's track and trace system you should contact the Public Health England Health Protection Team on 0300 303 8537. In all suspected cases onsite, we will follow the guidance set out by Public Health England which includes the isolation of the student or staff member and a thorough cleaning regime. Should your child need to isolate we will contact you directly.

Behaviour and expectations

Getting back into a good school routine is of paramount importance. We will continue to have extremely high expectations of all students on their return to school. As always, we will provide high academic challenge and will meet this with high levels of support to enable students to flourish. We have added an annex to the school behaviour policy to address some specific concerns related to coronavirus, such as making it clear that deliberate coughing or spitting at another member of the school community is a serious health risk and will be dealt with through our normal pastoral systems. A second addition to the policy is to make clear that students must follow teacher instructions related to safety (e.g. following the one-way system, avoiding mixing with other year groups etc.) and the proper use of face coverings should not disrupt learning. The changes made are Covid-19 related, to ensure that our policy meets the government guidelines for remote and on site learning as well as ensuring students understand the importance of following the school's expectations.

Attendance

Clear guidance has been given to schools regarding student attendance from September onwards. Students are expected to attend school each day. Normal school policies will be followed if attendance drops below 95%. The measures put in place by the school will ensure that the whole school community can attend school each day in a safe manner.

We expect all students to abide by our Behaviour for Learning policy, including the new Covid-19 agreement below, and we will not accept any behaviour that threatens the safety of our students or staff. We will be contacting home if a breach occurs and agreeing the consequences and sanctions for the student's poor behaviour choice.

Returning from travel abroad

Families who have recently returned from overseas travel will need to consult the government guidance regarding rules around quarantine. Year 7 and 12 students are expected in school on Thursday 3 September and with the rest of the school community returning for their specific induction session on Friday 4 September 2020. Timetabled lessons will begin from Monday 7 September.

COVID-19 SCHOOL AGREEMENT

Staff will...

- Provide an environment which has been risk assessed in response to the Covid-19 infection;
- Adhere to the social distancing rules as set out by the government as much as we reasonably can;
- Provide a curriculum that meets the needs of your child's well-being, mental health and academic needs;
- Contact parents/carers if your child displays symptoms of Covid-19;
- Inform you if staff or children in your child's 'bubble' show symptoms of Covid-19 as this will mean you will all need to self-isolate for at least 14 days or until the test comes back negative;
- Continue our clear and consistent approach to rewards and sanctions for children as set out in the Behaviour for Learning Policy as well the expectations outlined in this agreement;
- Communicate between home and school through notices, newsletters, text, email and the school website.

HOME As a Parent/Carer, I understand that ...

- If my child, or anyone in my household, shows symptoms of Covid-19, I will not send them to school, we will self-isolate for 14 days as a family, I will get them tested and I will let the school know as soon as possible via telephone;
- If requested by the school, I will collect my child from school immediately if they display symptoms of Covid-19;
- When dropping off and picking up, I will adhere to the school timings for my child and where driving will park responsibly outside the school site;
- My child will not bring any items into school with them that are not listed in the equipment section listed above;
- I will respect the need for the school to control visitors and will only attend the school site for pre-arranged appointments;
- I need to support all staff in their efforts to create an 'as safe as possible' environment during this crisis;
- Read all letters/messages/emails that are sent home;
- I need to inform the school immediately of any changes to parents/carers and emergency contacts details;
- The Headteacher can exclude my child for repeated breaches of safety, following the Behaviour for Learning policy guidelines.

STUDENT I will do my best to...

- Adhere to the social distancing rules in class and in social time;
- Tell an adult if I feel unwell;
- Only use my own equipment and no other;
- Only enter and exit the school building from the designated gate;
- Follow good respiratory hygiene: coughing and sneezing into elbow or tissue (catch it-bin it-kill it);
- Follow good hand hygiene – use soap and water for 20 seconds/hand sanitiser;
- Behave well at all times to maintain the safety of myself and others;
- Follow instructions of staff to ensure the safety of all;
- Follow the expectations as outlined in the Behaviour for Learning policy and know that if I don't, the consequences will be very serious.

Country wide or localised lockdown

If as a nation or more locally we are required to close the school, our distance learning strategy will come into operation once more. From September every child will be part of a Google Classroom for each of their timetabled subjects. Our staff will set all work on Google Classroom, where resources are stored, tasks are submitted and conversations with teachers and peers take place. We will also operate a timetable of live lessons and online tutor support via Google Meet, should the school close. Information will be provided to students and parents through the school newsletter, and through the Google Classroom platform which all students currently have access to. Students and parents will still have access to any work set on Show My Homework, although our default platform will be Google Classroom.

Preparing for school

Returning onsite after several months away may be daunting for your child and you may be feeling concerned about their return to school, especially if they find change difficult. If your child has been disengaged with their studies you may be anxious about their attitude to learning and worried about their education. Take some time to talk through their return with them and read this guide together. Pre-empt any worries your child may have by contacting their Director of Learning or Form Tutor prior to the start of term. If you feel the school needs to know any details about your lockdown experience that will support your child's return, or changes to your personal circumstances, please contact their Director of Learning. Our pastoral teams will be focusing on your child's social, emotional and mental well-being reintegration into the school environment.

School uniform

Uniform is a key component of our drive towards the highest standards here at Ridgeway Academy and we will continue to be rigorous in our application of the uniform policy. All students are absolutely clear about our expectations and so we expect there to be little difficulty for them. A reminder that students who are not in correct uniform will be sent home to change and return to school or kept out of timetabled lessons and I ask all families to reiterate this with their children. The uniform code is in all student planners with a copy on our website.

Directors of Learning / Year Group contact

Listed below are the contact details for the Director of Learning responsible for each year group:

Year 7 – Mrs M Tinker (merideth.tinker@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk)

Year 8 – Mr K Koupis (kostas.koupis@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk)

Year 9 - Mr W Sarjeant (william.sarjeant@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk)

Year 10 / 11 – Mr G Merrigan (glenn.merrigan@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk)

Year 12 / 13 – Mrs S Merrigan (sarah.merrigan@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk)

I would like to thank all parents and carers for the ongoing support that we receive from you. There has been some lovely feedback from parents during the lockdown period and over the summer, and staff really do appreciate this. If you have concerns, please do get in touch via your child's Form Tutor or Director of Learning.

I look forward to partnering with you in supporting your child's education from September.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Mitcherson
Headteacher