



# The Matthew Arnold School

Part of the Bourne Education Trust



27<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Students

First of all, can I say how much I am looking forward to seeing you all again - most of you for the first time since March. I really hope that you have all been keeping safe and well, and that you are looking forward to life returning to normal - well, more normal than it has been for a while, anyway.

I know many of you are anxious about the demands of coming back - what the day will look like, how you will catch up on work, whether you are more likely to catch coronavirus if you come back to school - these are just a few of your concerns, I know. Probably the best way for me to continue is to give you some frequently asked questions and answers. All the answers comply with government advice or guidance! Also remember to look at the '[September return](#)' tab on the school website - it has full details, while this is just a summary.

## 1. When do I return to school?

Please make sure you remember that you have moved up a year!

Year 7	Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September at 9.00 am - 1.00 pm, then Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 9.00 am - 3.00 pm
Year 8	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> September at 8.40 am (but you need to join a Teams meeting from home at 10.00 am on Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> September)
Year 9	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> September at 9.00 am (but you need to join a Teams meeting from home at 10.00 am on Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> September)
Year 10	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> September at 9.00 am (but you need to join a Teams meeting from home at 10.00 am on Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> September)
Year 11	Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> September at 10.00 am - 1.00 pm
All years will be in full-time from Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> September at 8.40 or 9.00 am	

I hope you will understand why we are prioritising our new year 7 students: they usually get two days to visit the school in July, but this year they missed out on that. Year 11 students will have a slightly extended training because it is their last year, because they will need to talk about their period 6, and because they will have extended responsibilities as the oldest students in the school.

Years 8, 9 and 10, we are looking forward to seeing you just as much! It is going to be really important that you understand term starts for you on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 10.00 am, even though you will be at home. You will have your initial training at a Teams meeting given by your head of year, and you can access this by phone. We will of course be repeating all this at regular points in the first few days and weeks!



## **2. Will the school day be different?**

Yes, depending on what year group you are in, the day will start and finish at different times and lunch will be in two sittings. We are doing this because we are acting on government advice. We are keeping you in your year groups - now called a 'bubble' - and away from other students in the school as much as possible. We have also created different areas of the building - now called a 'zone' - for you to have lessons, breaks, food and go to the toilet. The easiest way for you to see this is on the ['Bubbles and zones'](#) section of the website - all you need to do is click on your year group - remembering that you have gone up a year! All this is aimed at reducing the spread of the coronavirus as much as possible. Some of you may want to look at the [risk assessment](#) for yourselves.

## **3. Will all lessons be taught?**

Yes. The only difference you will notice is that you will be taught in different rooms from normal (although you will move to specialist rooms for some subjects. This will all be on your timetable). You may be focusing more on theory rather than practical elements of your subject.

## **4. How will I catch up on the work I have missed?**

It is up to us as teachers to help you find your feet again. We have slightly adjusted your timetable so that you get more English and maths for a while. We won't do any serious testing until we have all settled in, so please don't worry about that. What we want you to do is to come to school with an open mind, and be patient with yourself and others while you get back into the swing of learning.

## **5. I am really worried about my GCSEs, especially after all the reports of chaos and muddle in the media with this year's exams**

I am not surprised! I do feel that some very poor decisions were made, and even worse, changed many times at the last minute. However, I also know some lessons have been learnt. There have already been some changes made to reduce the amount you will need to know for your GCSEs and will make sure we are as clear as possible as soon as possible about that you need to know and what you don't know.

## **6. Will I be safe at school?**

We have worked really hard to make sure that everything we have been asked to do has been done, and more. As well as separating the year groups, there will be hand sanitiser at key points around the school, and in each classroom. Disinfectant wipes will also be available in every room. We will provide pencil cases with basic stationery so that you don't have to share equipment. We will not take your books in, but will take photographs of work instead. Each year group has its own toilets, and all classes will face forwards. But I cannot promise you that you will not catch coronavirus. This is a risk which the whole world faces at the moment.

**7. Will we have to wear face masks?**

Face coverings, yes. I need you to understand the difference between face masks and face coverings. Face masks are the really substantial things with air filters. They are only worn on a regular basis by frontline medical staff, scientists etc. We wear face coverings when we go into shops and other public places. They do not protect us from other people's germs, they stop people getting ours. We will be asking students and staff to wear a face covering in corridors and other communal areas such as toilets, but not in classrooms or outside the building. I am sending a letter to you and your parents today with my reasons for this.

**8. How are you going to make sure that all students follow the rules?**

By being as clear and honest about things as possible. Students have a right to know why decisions are made which affect them. I think the more students understand why rules are in place, the happier they will be to follow them. This is why we are having training for each year group. I do know that this isn't a magic recipe, however! I have updated the school behaviour policy to include adherence to coronavirus measures. Each year group will have a member of the senior leadership team attached to them and they will be very visible in your area of the school. The 4R system will be used more strictly. But I am not going to ask my staff to try to catch students out. We are all going to have to work together to model good practice and help each other remember why we are acting in this way.

**9. Do I have to wear uniform?**

Yes. It is really important that we get back to normality as quickly as possible, and this is one of the best ways to do it. We need to see you all in full school uniform (you know the rules) and will be our normal strict selves when it comes to insisting on high standards. In addition to the way you wear your uniform, we will insist on natural hair colours and styles, no false nails or eyelashes of any kind, discreet make up only if you are in year 10 or 11, and no jewellery at all except one small stud in each ear. If you wear a skirt, we will insist that it is not rolled up at all.

**10. How do you find out my worries?**

Your head of year and form tutor are going to be even more important to you than usual in this respect. We will give you the chance to complete surveys on a regular basis (the first one will appear at the bottom of this letter). I am also going to be asking the Head Boy and Head Girl to work with the Student Voice to feed back on your concerns once school starts, so you know you have a safe way to make sure your opinion is heard.

**11. Is it true that mobile phones are still banned?**

Yes. The government has not suggested that mobile phones are used by students during the school day. In fact, because we need to cut down on unnecessary admin and handling, we will be keeping confiscated phones over weekends and holidays if the five-day period has not finished, so be prepared!

**12. What is the best way to get to school?**

If you can walk or cycle, then please do so. It is better for you, better for the environment, and will keep you in control of how close you need to be to members of the public. If you take public transport, you must wear a face covering and be prepared for the bus or train to be full much more often than usual. If you come by car, please remind whoever is driving that they cannot drive onto the school site and to drop you near the main entrance if you are in years 7, 9 or 11, or in Edinburgh Drive if you are in years 8 or 10. If you car-share, please remind your parents that this should be with a regular group of people only.

If you get the 667 bus, this will be operating at its usual times and is likely to limit passengers to a maximum of 20. This may cause problems for some students and we are working on a solution now. Please use the survey link at the bottom of this letter to let us know if you use the 667 bus.

**13. Is it true that I can't see people out of school if they are not in my bubble?**

The government has asked parents to try to make sure you keep to the same social group outside school as in school. This is because coronavirus has not gone away. We need to prevent the spread of infection, and it will only work if we all do our part. If you have brothers and sisters and you share a friendship group, keep to your existing group and don't extend it yet.

**14. What else do I need to think about?**

This is going to feel like a huge change after so many months. You will almost certainly feel exhausted by the end of the first week. You also need to be kind to yourself, and wherever possible, talk about how you are feeling when you are given the chance to do so. It really does help, and we have ALL been emotionally affected by this change in our lives.

I hope that this has answered some of your questions. I think we all know that things could (and probably will) change again before you come back. However, the framework will remain the same and I will of course let you and your parents know if anything does change. In the meantime, please do spend a few minutes completing this survey about returning to school.

[Return to school survey](#)

I know I speak for all staff in saying how much we are looking forward to having you all back in. The Matthew Arnold School needs its students! Enjoy the last few days of your holiday and stay happy and healthy.

With very best wishes



Mary Gould

Headteacher