



30 September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

RE: Changes to the timings of the School day from 5th October

We have been very impressed with the maturity of your children, our students, as they arrive and walk around the site whilst adapting to the changes in academy routines. This attitude means that we can reduce the staggered start/finish time **from Monday 5th October 2020**.

We know this will be welcomed by many of you as the weather changes and the dark evenings descend:

Year Group	Academy starts at	Academy ends at (Mon, Tues, Thurs)	Academy ends at (Weds)	Academy ends at (Fri)
Year 7	09:00	15:00	16:00	13:30
Year 8	08:55	14:55	15:55	13:25
Year 9	08:50	14:50	15:50	13:20
Year 10	08:45	14:45	15:45	13:15
Year 11	08:30	14:30	15:30	13:00
Year 12	08:35	14:35	15:35	13:05
Year 13	08:40	14:40	15:40	13:10

Students are now used to entering the school grounds and going straight to their designated floor/classrooms. This will continue for the foreseeable future for all of our safety.

Covid-19 Update

Following our recent communication, we are pleased to confirm that the academy has remained fully open and our attendance levels are high. We believe it is very important that your child receives face-to-face teaching given these very uncertain times and would encourage you to send them in if it is safe to do so. In line with other schools, we do however, have several staff members and students that have had to self-isolate and take a Covid-19 test. We continue to follow the DfE guidance and seek advice from Public Healthcare England so that our response minimises the risk of possible further infection. The academy will contact individual staff, students and parents where we believe close contact has been made and will follow the advice of PHE.

Given the increase in positive test results in the country, although we are yet to have a positive test result at DPA, we continue to feel it's prudent to have a plan for remote learning if we need a group to learn from home for a period. We also cannot stress enough the importance of following the advice and basic hygiene measures of socially distancing, washing hands, using sanitiser, using tissues and discarding them in bins will need to continue to help keep us all safe.

Face Coverings

The vast majority of students have been remembering to wear their face coverings to school or on public transport or when going into shops. Please ensure that your son/daughter always carries an appropriate face covering with them.



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Nick Caulfield – Principal



We are a UCAS registered centre



SELF-WORTH ASPIRE SUCCESS HONESTY

Financial Hardship

We encourage parents that are experiencing financial difficulties to get in contact with our Business Manager via office@dittonparkacademy.co.uk to discuss further if there are any ways we can help to support you. If your circumstances have changed and you think you may now be eligible for free school meals, we would encourage you to apply which we can help you with.

Major traffic concerns

Just a reminder that we are asking all parents to find alternative ways of students coming to school. A separate letter has already been sent about this as we are very worried about the safety of our students. As the roads around Ditton Park Academy are public roads there is little we can do apart from appeal to you as parents to play your part in keeping our students/your children safe by not driving into the Kings Reach Estate.

Restaurant/Lunch/Breaks

We are delighted that we are able to offer a good service of refreshments throughout the day given the significant restrictions we are having to operate under at the moment. Remember, students can purchase food or a packed lunch to eat later in the day during another break time. Please keep your child's parent pay account topped up so that they can access healthy and fresh food. Could we also ask that you speak with your child about what they are purchasing for snacks if you are giving them money? A number of local shops have alerted us to an increase in DPA students using their services. They clearly enjoy the increase in revenue but not the volume. In discussions we are aware that some students are buying energy drinks and sweets and this is not going to support their general health which has never been more important.

Microsoft 365/TEAMS

All students, including year 7, should now be able to log on and access our online learning platform. Could we ask that you support your child at home and spend some time looking with them at how they log on and use the huge amount of support materials available to them through Microsoft Teams. This is very important as we continue to work closely with the DfE about how schools can deliver learning safely in school or at home.

Access to computers/Internet

We are aware that the above becomes impossible unless you have the internet and a device like a computer. Many students will attempt to use more mobile devices like smartphones but this is not recommended for a sustained period of time. We will be contacting all parents in the near future to see what additional support can be offered either through the school, local authority or other national schemes.

Uniform

Thank you for making a real effort to ensure our students arrive at school smart and ready to learn. We are aware our uniform supplier had a delay on a few items but now after four weeks we are confident these have been resolved. The specific issues we are now wanting you to address are making sure skirts are tailored and knee length and footwear are black shoes. If you need support with this, please contact your child's academic mentor.

Equipment/Practical subjects

This is one of the biggest challenges we have all faced with the restrictions on providing young people with the usual things to help them with their studies because of the guidelines. We are delighted that the students and you as parents have ensured that they are well equipped as individuals so that they are still able to access their subjects. We are also now beginning to very slowly re-introduce some practical elements to the upper school lessons where it is safe to do so. Governors have also agreed, at significant cost, for us to replace all our stools in science and art for ones with a backs. We are expecting delivery in the next couple of weeks.



Cycling to / from the Academy

Please ensure that if your child cycles, they do so with an adequate **cycle helmet** and that they **lock** their bike in the appropriate cycle rack area. This is very important as the bike remains the responsibility of the students even when in the bike racks and therefore should be locked up properly.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We are considering starting a reduced programme of extra- curricular activities soon but need to ensure that year groups remain separate on site. Please be aware that they may need to be cancelled or rearranged at short notice. We will keep parents informed of any changes via School Comms.

Communication

We hope that our communication is at the right level, particularly for any families that are new to us this academic year. We will soon conduct a survey to gauge feelings about our full reopening. If you do have any queries, positive or negative, please feel free to contact your child's academic mentor in the first instance. In the meantime, please use our website and follow us on Twitter.

Water Bottles

We have been advised that the fountains remain out of action for the foreseeable future to reduce the risk of cross contamination. Drinking water is available for every student through taps/sinks in their designated area but does require them to have a bottle to fill up. Keeping themselves hydrated is very important in maintaining their health and energy levels.

Thank you for your ongoing support and for ensuring our procedures are followed to help create a safe environment for our students and staff.

Yours faithfully

Nick Caulfield
Principal

Chris McNab
Associate Principal