

7th December 2020

PLEASE READ THIS LETTER IN FULL

Dear Parent / Carer,

COVID19 Update - decision to close the academy site to Years 8-11, staying open to Year 7 only

After extensive dialogue, I have taken the incredibly difficult decision to close the Year 8, 9, 10 & 11 Year Groups with immediate effect and move their education to remote online Microsoft Teams learning until the end of this term (Friday 18th December). This decision is made with the full agreement and support of the Trust, Public Health England and the Local Authority.

The following key considerations have been crucial in shaping the decision:

- the academy cannot fully open safely with the current level of staff absence, due to COVID19
- consideration of the health and safety of all pupils, staff and the wider community, which remains our number one priority
- the intent to protect online timetabled remote offer for those learning at home
- it breaks the chain of COVID19 infection and helps limit any further transmission
- it allows us to get the academy deep cleaned and 'fogged' with electro-static disinfectant

I have endeavoured to provide regular updates on the impact that COVID19 is having on our academy, this despite the extensive measures that we have put in place to mitigate the risk. At the start of this ½ term, our Year 11s were remote learning via Microsoft Teams, then subsequently Year 9s followed this model with remote learning using Oak National Academy. These measures were implemented because we experienced spikes in COVID19 positives in each of the Year Groups. Unfortunately, in the last 2 weeks the number of confirmed COVID19 positive cases has continued to rise across our student and staff body. You will also have seen in the local press that Thurrock COVID19 positive cases have risen very quickly and that Thurrock has the 3rd highest rate of transmission in the East of England.

Alongside a number of students testing positive across all Year Groups, with our Year 7s being the lowest, we have also unfortunately had a number of teachers test positive with several more awaiting test results. Consequently, we have had regularly between 15-20 teachers having to self-isolate daily and many of these staff will continue to self-isolate until the end of term and cannot attend work. It is therefore not safe, or responsible, to open our academy to all students and staff as usual and instead online provision is the best option to ensure that disruption to learning is minimised and so that we can safeguard our school community.

As you would expect, we have remained in close daily contact with both Public Health England and the Local Authority throughout this period. Having discussed the situation with them at length about the best course of action we need to take to keep infections as low as possible and provide the best educational provision possible, the following will be in place from tomorrow morning (Tuesday 8th December):

Closure of Year 8, 9, 10 & 11 Year Groups (ASCEND will remain open)

- **Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 will move to remote online Microsoft Teams learning until the end of term.** Sadly, this type of Year Group closure has become common place across the country.
- If we have previously notified you that your child was in close 'contact' with a confirmed case, they still need to self-isolate until the date outlined in the letter we sent you. If your child develops COVID19 symptoms during this Year Group closure, please get them tested as you normally would and inform the academy of a positive result.

Year 7 Arrangements

- **Year 7 (which has a low number of cases and the youngest pupils) will remain in school, following the normal timings of their school day and their normal timetable as much as possible.**

Work arrangements until the end of term for Year 8, 9, 10 & 11

- We will endeavour to follow the normal timetables as much as possible. This means that at the time of your child's lesson their teacher will teach the timetabled lesson on Microsoft Teams. Each lesson will last for 40 minutes instead of the usual 60 minutes, this to allow both students and staff time to log in and prepare correctly for each lesson. During the lesson time teachers will be able to answer questions and speak to the children about the learning. Outside of the normal lesson time, they will not be available to do this as they will be teaching other classes.
- Given that some staff are unwell at present, not all lessons will necessarily be able to be conducted as outlined above. Where that is the case, we will endeavour to set work on Microsoft Teams and / or Showmyhomework. Both should be checked regularly.

I appreciate that the management of the pandemic is a matter of much debate but I assure you that we are acting on the best advice and with the health and wellbeing of our whole community as our first priority, balanced against the crucial protection of educational provision.

If your child is in Years 8-11, please do not hesitate to contact the academy office should your child have any issues accessing their learning from home as they are not physically attending the academy until January.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support, cooperation and understanding. It is hugely appreciated, at what continues to be a challenging time for everyone.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Roessler
Principal

All students have already been trained on how to use Microsoft Teams in case of this eventuality.

Here is a reminder to students how to access Microsoft Teams Teaching and below is a link to an instructional PowerPoint:

Logging onto Microsoft Teams

1. Go to search bar and type www.office.com
2. Click on sign in button
3. Enter your school e-mail address
4. Click on next
5. Enter the password for your e-mail address.
6. Press sign in then you can select if you want to stay signed in.
7. You will then be shown a series of icons. Click on the teams Icon
8. If you cannot find it, you can search for teams in the search area.
9. You then just need to click on the calendar. This will show the classes you have been invited to.
10. When you are invited to a lesson, click on accept and it will then be added to your calendar.
11. At the time of the lesson, click on the join now tab and it will take you to the lesson.

<https://ormistonparkacademy.sharepoint.com/:p/s/TeamsTrainingforStudents/ESQurBOHXMxIrdAxmxxS1S4BUstJYN044fDff1H3oMKI2w?e=r0xtwg>