



August 18th 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

I hope this letter finds you safe, well and enjoying the Summer break. I had this letter ready to send yesterday just before the Government announced that the proposed OFQUAL GCSE and A'Level Grades are being dropped in favour of Centre Assessed Grades. As has happened many times this last few months, I have made a few quick amendments before now sending you the latest exam updates as well as some information for the start of term.

A'Level Superstars

At Colmers, our Sixth Form is such an important part of what we are about: we offer a superb academic route for those students who want to go on to university and this year, we were keeping everything crossed that our students would not be disadvantaged in what is an exceptionally unique set of circumstances.

After the stress and anxiety caused by the published A'Level grades, we heard yesterday that students will be awarded their centre Assessed Grades: these are the grades that the school submitted after a rigorous moderation process. This will make an important difference to some of our students but even before the Government U-turn, I was ready to pass on the really good news is that the vast majority of our A'Level students are progressing to their first or second choice universities.

It was wonderful to see the impact of these well-deserved successes when students came to collect their results last week. Heartfelt congratulations go to all of the students and their families for these tremendous achievements, We have students heading off to study a wonderful array of degree subjects, including criminology, history, primary education, psychology, physics, mathematics, quantity surveying, biomedical sciences, film studies and sociology. We are seeing students progress to a wider range of universities than ever, including Birmingham City University, Nottingham Trent, York St John, Newman, Gloucestershire, Aberystwyth and De Montford, Leicester. This is a tremendous achievement and source of pride for our whole school community. We will continue to support those individuals who are working through next steps, especially where exam grades have been amended upwards.

I would like to send my personal thanks and appreciation to every one of our Year 13 students for your incredible hard work, your contribution to our community during your time at Colmers and your resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. You have been a credit to this school community and your families. I wish you all the very best as you progress on the exciting next steps of your journey.

GCSE Results Day

As we approach GCSE results, I imagine that students and parents/carers will be anxious although we are reassured that we will no longer be facing grades that have been adjusted downwards by OFQUAL. Even though it is a stressful time, it really is important to try hard not to worry – we will be here to help and support and I am also sure we will have much to celebrate.

We will be open for students to collect results as planned on Thursday July 20th, with strict social distancing in place. We are asking students to come in at set times, details can be found here:

<http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/exams/>

Unfortunately, while we are socially distancing, parents and carers will not be able to accompany students when they collect results. Staff will be on site to support individuals who may need assistance with next steps and we are happy to book appointments with parents and carers, either on site or on-line, to support anyone needing advice or guidance.

For those students who would prefer to receive results at home, please email exams@colmers.school to make sure we have you on the list for e-mail exam results delivery on Thursday 20th.

Start of Term Preparations #backtoschoolsafely

A great deal of work is going on to prepare for start of term and I will be writing again next week with more detailed information. The Government yesterday launched their Back to School Safely campaign and you can find useful information on the Department for Education Webpages here gov.uk/backtoschool

You can help us prepare for the start of term by ensuring your child has the correct uniform and equipment ready for the start of term. You can find full details of our uniform requirements on our website, using this link: <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/school-uniform-and-equipment/>

Uniform

One of the ways we emphasise Belonging Together at Colmers is through really **high standards of uniform** so please do pay careful attention to the requirements for **black leather-type school shoes** and for school trousers that are not skin-tight.

I appreciate this is a difficult time for many families financially and we have been able to offer **support** with uniform by collecting and passing on pre-loved uniform. If you have uniform that your child has grown out of or that you no longer require, do please drop it into school and we will recycle it to other students so that it does not go to waste. If you need assistance with uniform, please contact Main Reception on 0121 453 1778 and we will do what we can to help.

If your child has had the freedom during lockdown and the Summer break to dye their **hair** bright colours or has chosen to have additional **piercings**, please prepare over the next 2 weeks to restore hair to natural colours and to remove all piercings other than one small set of earrings for the start of term. Please note we do not accept acrylic piercings or coverings.

Equipment

As part of our preparation for the start of term, we are preparing an **equipment pack** for each student that will contain pens (green, black and red), pencil, ruler and mini-whiteboard. Many students will also want to carry their own equipment which we strongly encourage.

It will be essential that your child has a **school bag** big enough to carry their coat, a reading book, a school planner and a drink and snack for the short breaks they will have within the lesson during periods 1 and 3 of the school day.

Parent/Carer and Student Queries and Responses

At the end of term, I wrote to parents to let you know about our plans for September. In order to reduce the risk of virus transmission, we will have a range of measures in place to keep everyone safe and the letter that outlines this can be found here: <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Parents-and-Carers-From-E-Leaman-about-Safely-returning-in-September-15-07-2020.pdf>

The survey issued to parents, carers and students drew out some really important questions and below you will find the beginning of a Frequently Asked Questions document, which will grow as the start of term approaches. You can also find the document on our website here: <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/FAQs-September-2020.pdf>

We are looking forward hugely to seeing all of our students back in school from September 7th (yrs 7, 11, 12) and September 8th (yrs 8, 9, 10 & 13). I understand some of you may have worries or concerns - if you do want to talk through specific worries or issues, please do not hesitate to contact me on eleaman@colmers.school.

Please stay safe and well for the remainder of the holidays: social distancing remains hugely important while the risk of COVID-19 is still with us, especially as we enjoy the greater freedoms now that lockdown has been eased.

Best wishes,



Emma Leaman
Headteacher

Colmers School September 2020: Back to School Safely Arrangements

Frequently Asked Questions

Start of Term

Has the Year 7 start date been changed and how will you make sure everyone knows?

We have changed the date for students to return to school to give us time to prepare the site and classrooms. Year 7 start back on Monday September 7th. We will keep sending out details via ParentMail as well as on our website and social media platforms.

When will Year 7 meet their Form Tutor, their teaches and the other children in their bubble

Year 7 will meet their form tutors on the first day for an Introduction to Colmers session. Each year group forms one bubble. Students in Year 7 will be taught in two different teaching groups; one group for Maths, English Science and a different group for all of their other subjects. They will have one lesson a week with their Form Tutor.

Will children be told where to go on the first day ?

Yes, all students will get an email telling them the specific arrangements on the first day and there will be staff outside school and on all of the entrances and external areas to help students find their way on the first day. There will be a special meet and greet welcome for Year 7 on their first day and they will be given a tour of the school.

On their first day back, all students will have a lesson with their Form Tutor to help them learn about the changes in school and settle back in. They will then start their new timetables.

Attendance and the School Day

Will children be going to school from Monday to Friday?

Yes, all children will be in school every day, from Monday to Friday.

Why is the school day shorter this year? Are students getting less learning time?

Although the school day is shorter, students are still getting exactly the same amount of lesson time, which is 25 hours a week. We have reduced the school day because we cannot manage a daily time in Form Groups every morning as this would involve too much pupil movement. So the school day is shorter because of the change to tutor time.

Before and After School

My child is going to be bringing their younger sibling in the mornings, Will they be able to come in using the same entrance?

We have 3 different entrances and students will have to enter and exit via their own entrance zone even if they have to drop off or collect a sibling. Siblings will need to agree between them what arrangements they will stick to at the end of the day so they can meet up and go home together safely.

My child walks to and from school with their friend in a different year group. Can she still do this?

Government Guidance asks us to help students think carefully about social distancing on their way to and from school. There is nothing to stop students travelling together but they should always follow social distancing measures, whether they are walking or travelling on public transport.

Lesson Arrangements

The number of lessons in a day has changed from 5 to 3. Will the 1hr 40 minute lessons be split up between subjects or will students study one subject for the whole of the 1hr 40minutes?

Each lesson is 1hr 40 minutes, or 100 minutes, and will be for one subject only. The timetable covers all subjects over a period of 2 weeks.

How will you make sure students don't switch off in 100-minute lessons?

Teachers are working hard to plan longer lessons: some schools already have 100 minute lessons and at one time so did Colmers! We think longer lessons could be a real positive especially for practical subjects and we are thinking carefully about how we support students who may not adapt so easily to longer lessons. Staff will be considering how to keep lessons varied so that students engage and get as much as possible out of the longer learning slots.

Brunch Break

What provision is there for pupils who take their own lunch?

Students who bring their own lunch will be able to eat either in a designated covered area or the canteen during their brunch break.

Will the children be allowed outside for their brunch break after they have finished eating?

Yes, there will be a designated external area for each year group during the Brunch Break where they can go after they finish in the canteen or where they can eat if they prefer to eat outside.

How will you make sure that not all children arrive at the same time at the canteen for their brunch break?

Will there be different times for different years?

There will be 3 different brunch break time slots. 2 year groups will be on Bruch at one time and will be kept separate. The food available will be the same for all year groups but the menu will not be as varied as usual so that we can have the different serving points.

Why are children not allowed to refill their water bottles during the day?

In order to reduce student moving and mixing between year groups, we are taking water fountains out of use. This is a social distancing safety measure and we ask that all students bring a bottle of water with them to school every day.

Uniform

If pupils are to wear PE kit to school on days when they have pe will they be able to wear tracksuit trousers to school ?

Yes, if students have PE they need to wear their PE Kit on that day. They will be able to wear a pair of black, blue or grey tracksuit trousers or jogging bottoms to school. Students in Years 7 & 8 will be able to wear their school jumper, students in Years 9, 10 and will be able to wear a warm top, preferably black, blue or grey.

Social Distancing and Hygiene

What distancing will there be in the classroom?

Students will sit at their normal desks. The Government Guidance is that we have all students back in school. We have reduced the number of groups students are taught in and students will not be in contact with students outside of their year group bubble. We have also reduced movement between lessons and time out of classrooms to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

What distancing will there be in the canteen?

The canteen will be used differently before school and at dinner time. At all times, year groups will be kept separate in the canteen and areas will be cleaned between usage if they are used by different year groups.

Will hot water be available in the toilets for hand washing and will there be hand sanitiser?

In each of the student toilet zones there will be hot water, soap and sanitiser. In addition, we have hand wash stations in the playground (cold water only) and sanitiser stations dotted all around school and in classrooms. We also encourage students to carry their own personal bottle of hand sanitiser if they wish to do so.