



MAIDEN ERLEGH

SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mr P. Gibson

MSc (Educational Leadership), BA (Economics)

Silverdale Road, Earley,
Reading, RG6 7HS

0118 926 2467

mesoffice@maidenerleghtrust.org

www.maidenerleghschool.co.uk

This letter will be sent to external Year 12 and new Year 7 students joining us from September on 28 August

27 August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student

Final Letter to Parents and Students

I hope you have managed to have a relaxing summer and enjoyed the nice weather, when it was with us! We are counting down the days to welcoming the students back in to school and we are excited to see them. As always, things have been changing with regards to the guidance for reopening schools and Covid-19. I wanted to write to you with two purposes – firstly to reissue the letter that was sent in July to remind you of the plans for September and secondly to update you on changes that have been made to our original plan. As always, please get in touch if you have any questions via the main office email.

Key Changes

Face Coverings

As you may be aware, on Tuesday evening, the Government changed their stance regarding face coverings in schools. Previously, they advised that face coverings in school are not necessary. However, this has now been changed with the DfE stating:

Nationwide, while the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary, schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas if they believe that is right in their particular circumstances.

In addition, and consistent with WHO's new advice, the government will advise additional measures are taken in areas where the transmission of the virus is high. In these areas, defined as areas of national government intervention as listed on gov.uk, the government's guidance will state face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils in secondary schools when moving around the school, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. It will not be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and where they can inhibit learning.

As a result, myself and the other Headteachers, alongside Trust leads met on Wednesday to discuss the use of face coverings at Maiden Erlegh School. We considered that our area has very low rates of Covid-19 transmissions and we have already taken a lot of precautions to minimise risk as seen by the communications you have received from me. We have therefore made the decision, that in line with Government guidance, we will not be making the wearing of masks mandatory at school.

However, we are aware that some students and staff feel more comfortable when wearing a face covering, and in busy areas of the school such as corridors this may alleviate some of the concern they have. *As a result, we will be allowing staff and students to wear face coverings in communal areas of the school (including the 6th form study rooms) should they wish to do so.* These masks must be non-offensive and not contain any logos, flags or offensive language. Any student miss-using a mask will be required to take it off. We are strongly advising parents to provide students with a sealable bag, such as a sandwich bag, in which to store their face coverings during lessons, etc.

One-way system

Whilst not a change to our plan, I wanted to draw your attention to how our new one-way system will operate. Predominantly, students will be flowing across the site in an anti-clockwise direction and branching off into their scheduled area. Movement across the site will be minimised by students only needing to move to different areas for lunch, practical sessions or where their bubble is housed in more than one block. This one-way system is clearly marked out with arrows on the floor at very regular intervals.

Risk assessments for extremely clinically vulnerable students

Over the INSET days on 1 and 2 September we will be contacting the parents of students who fall under the above category, to complete a risk assessment and ensure we are able to fully support their return. We are using the current NHS guidance on the definition of those who fall into the high-risk category. They are students who:

- have had an organ transplant
- are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy
- are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer
- are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors)
- have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine
- have been told by a doctor they have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD)
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

If a student falls into this category, they will have received a letter from the NHS. If you feel your child is in this list and have not been contacted by the school by the end of the day on 2 September please email the school office. In addition, if you have received the letter from the NHS, please feel free to let us know.

Sixth Form

There have been some minor changes to the organisation of lunches and study areas which will be communicated to you separately in an email from Miss Cheshire.

Fire Evacuation

In the event of a fire or a fire alarm sounding, this becomes the highest risk (meaning fire evacuation plans supersede any plans for Covid-19) and students should follow guidance that will be given to them on their first day back and all instructions given by staff during the fire alarm. Due to a marquee being erected on the top tennis courts we will have limited capacity for congregation and students in the following year groups should assemble in these new areas:

Years 7-10 – Top tennis court

Year 11 – Lower tennis court

Years 12&13 – Astro pitches

Catch up funding and education continuation

As you may be aware, the Government introduced £1bn of funding for schools to help students catch up following the school closures last academic year. We have recently been informed that this equates to approximately £80 per student. We are still firmly of the belief that the best way for students to make expected progress is by Quality First Teaching and this is something we will continue to provide. In addition, Miss Young will be carrying out a needs analysis in September and targeting students who we believe will benefit from the use of this funding. It is important to note, that not every student will receive tutoring etc, this will be directed at those who need most support to get them back on track in their learning.

Perspex Screens

To ensure we are able to accommodate all students safely at lunch, students who will be eating in the larger dining room (Year 9, 10 and 11) will be able to face each other whilst eating following the installation of over 50 Perspex screens. In other areas (Lower school hall (Year 7) and the small dining room (Year 8)) students will sit side by side eliminating the risk of face to face contact.

Further information

I would now like to recap on information shared with you before July to ensure you are fully aware of the systems in place to keep everyone safe whilst maintaining a high-quality education.

Testing, Hygiene and Cleaning

Firstly, it is crucial that if a student or someone in the household displays symptoms of Covid-19 they must remain at home and immediately book a test. We also ask that you inform the school and if the test is positive you fully engage with the NHS track and trace process. As a school we will work with our local Health Protection Team should there be an outbreak.

One of the biggest barriers to preventing the spread of Covid-19 is good hand and respiratory hygiene. We have invested heavily in hand sanitiser products including wall dispensers to be installed at entry and exit points and outside toilets to ensure students are able to sanitise their hands easily and regularly. There will also be regular reminders in the form of posters and tutor messages about this important barrier to infection. Respiratory hygiene is also crucial in minimising any risk and we are asking students to follow the catch it, bin it, kill it message but to do this we need your support in providing students with packs of tissues should they require them. Bins will be available in every classroom and around the school for the disposal of used tissues.

We will have added further cleaning regimes throughout the day to ensure that the most touched areas, such as door handles, are cleaned more often than normal.

Daily Logistics

The main change to the normal school day will be the generation of year group 'bubbles'. This entails timetabling lessons in blocks or areas of the school to reduce the contact with other year groups. From September the majority of lessons will take place in the blocks below for each year group and students should go to these blocks at the start of the first day. This is also where their tutor groups will be based:

Year 7 – Lower School
Year 8 – N and P block
Year 9 – G Corridor
Year 10 – H Corridor
Year 11 – L Corridor
Year 12 – F Corridor
Year 13 – B, S and C Block

It is important to note that whilst most lessons are in these areas, there may be some overspill into other areas and when this does occur, there is a strict one-way system in place to minimise close contact during these transition times. This will also allow students to still access practical subjects, such as PE, music, science, etc. All practical subjects have been risk assessed and will only carry out activities deemed safe.

At breaktime students will be expected to stay in their assigned area and at lunch the students will eat in the following places:

Year 7 – Lower School Hall (over 3 snack breaks)
Year 8 – Dining Room 1 (over 3 snack breaks)
Years 9, 10 & 11 – Dining Room 2 (1 snack break per year group)
Year 12 & 13 – see separate letter

Whilst hot food will be available in these areas, we are encouraging all students, including 6th form, to bring a packed lunch to school to help us manage the queues and help to maintain the safety of students and staff.

Arrival times will be staggered to ensure a safe arrival to school by minimising the contact with other year groups. The times below are when we expect students to arrive at school and in addition we are asking students to use different entrances which are also laid out below (for 6th form please refer to specific letter):

Arrival Time	Year Group	Entrance	Year Group	Entrance
8.30am	7	Silverdale Road Entrance	Sixth Form Tutor Week	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
8.35am	8	Silverdale Road Entrance	10	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
8.40am	9	Silverdale Road Entrance	11	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance

5 minutes before their 1 st scheduled lesson			Sixth Form Non-Tutor Week	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
---	--	--	---------------------------	------------------------------

If students are scheduled to enter via the Silverdale Road entrance, we are asking that they do not walk down Maiden Erlegh Drive but instead walk around to the front of school and enter from Silverdale Road. However, if this is not possible they must walk along the top car park by Aldryngton and enter via the Silverdale Road main gate. Likewise, if a student is due to enter via the Maiden Erlegh Drive gate, we are asking that they do not enter via Silverdale Road but enter via Maiden Erlegh Drive. However, if this is not possible they must walk along the top car park and enter via the back gate. This will allow the flow of students to be more controlled, prevent bunching and therefore minimise the risk. **We are asking for your support on this to make the entry and exit to school as safe as possible.** We accept that this may add time to the journey of some students (we anticipate a max of 15 mins) but to meet Government guidance we must manage the flow of nearly 1900 students and with only 2 gates this is the best way to do so.

Departure from school will also be staggered to ensure bubbles do not mix. The timetable for departure is laid out below (times in brackets are for Friday):

Departure Time	Year Group	Entrance	Year Group	Entrance
2.55pm (2.20pm)	7	Silverdale Road Entrance	Year 11	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
3.00pm (2.25pm)	8	Silverdale Road Entrance	10	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
3.05pm (2.30pm)	9	Silverdale Road Entrance	12 (when a period 5 (4) is in place)	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance
3.10pm (2.35pm)			Year 13 (when a period 5 (4) is in place)	Maiden Erlegh Drive Entrance

I am aware that some students may see this as unfair and as a result we will review the exit times at half term. **The exit gates are compulsory and once again we ask for your support on the use of Maiden Erlegh Drive and the Silverdale Road Entrance but where this is not possible we ask that the top car park is used.**

In lessons

In lessons, students will be in normal class sizes and all chairs will face the front. The arrangement of rooms into rows means the time spent facing each other is minimised and thus the risk is reduced. The teacher will deliver lessons from the front of the room and there will be a gap of at least 2 metres between them and the students on the front row, again to minimise any risk to both the student and staff member. Should a student need individual support, this will be given from the side or behind.

Where resources need to be given out, these will be shared by the teacher to minimise the number of people touching them. The member of staff will also sanitise their hands before touching the resources each time. Homework will predominantly be submitted via Google Classroom and marked via this platform also. Where work cannot be handed in in this way, there will be a 48 hour window before the member of staff takes them home (if they have to) and a 48 hour window to return the work to minimise the risk.

In practical subjects there have been risk assessments carried out to ensure that activities follow the guidance and as a result some of our normal delivery may be slightly altered to ensure we maintain safety. Examples may include:

- Some experiments being demonstrated via a visualiser rather than students completing it.
- Scheduled PE rotas may incorporate different sports and activities to the normal.
- Singing may be removed from the music curriculum in the short term.
- Some tools in Design and Technology may not be used.

However, our aim is to offer the broadest curriculum we possibly can to ensure students get the best from their time in school. Whilst doing this, we must balance that desire with the requirement to keep everyone safe.

There will be no shared tools for learning and so it is vital that students bring what is required for school. A letter has been sent out and we appreciate your support in ensuring your child is fully equipped for school.

Uniform

Students will be expected to wear full school uniform as outlined in my previous letter and the guidance from the Department for Education clearly states that there is no requirement to clean this any more often than normal nor in a different way to normal. The exception to our normal school policy on uniform is that on days where students have practical PE lessons they will be able to wear their PE kit to and from school to prevent the requirement from getting changed in the changing rooms which are small and therefore maintaining a safe position would be difficult. We ask that students only wear the specified PE kit and do not add additional hoodies, etc. to this.

Academic and wellbeing support

Our Heads of Department and teachers have been working tirelessly to prepare the curriculum for September and our 'revival' curriculum is ready for the students. This builds on using assessment and Personal Learning Checklists completed in lockdown to guide how the lessons will be sequenced and areas which still need to be revisited have been plotted in to the academic year. We work on a spiral curriculum model where what students learn previously is revisited through other topics and areas to ensure students know more and remember more. We are extremely confident that none of our students will be disadvantaged academically by the lockdown period.

We are also aware that some students may be struggling mentally from this period of lockdown and we have planned to do some work with students on how to cope with the change in routine of coming back to school and staff will also be trained on spotting signs in students which suggest they may not be ok. We will speak to the student and put appropriate support in place, where possible, and communicate with you on this. Please remember we are here to help if you feel you or your child needs support.

I also want to inform you that, from September 1 2020, Mrs J Bhadye will be our Designated Safeguarding Lead and should you have any queries or concerns relating to this area, please contact her via the school office.

Attendance

Finally, it is important to note that in March when the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak was increasing, the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.

This means from the start of term in September, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, namely that parents have a duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and schools have a duty to follow up absences which includes the issuing of sanctions, including fixed penalty notices.

Where a pupil/student is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer them access to remote education and their absence will not be penalised. We expect there to be very few children in this category, however.

All other pupils must attend school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance, etc).

We understand that for some parents this will be a worrying and anxious time. If you are anxious about your child returning to school, you should contact the school office as soon as possible in order to discuss your concerns.

Finally, I want to remind you that Years 7 and 12 will return for induction on Thursday 3 September (a separate reminder has/ will be sent to these year groups) and the other year groups on Friday 4 September. Entry to school on Friday 4 should follow the arrangements above.

We hope this letter reassures you that we have a secure plan in place to both keep the students safe and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum at the same time.

We are thrilled to be welcoming #TeamMaidenErlegh back and look forward to working with you over the coming year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a trailing flourish.

Mr P Gibson
Headteacher