August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We are very much looking forward to welcoming all children and young people back to Appleton Academy in September and staff have been working hard getting school prepared. I am writing to you to provide information and try to answer as many of the questions you may have as possible. The accompanying letters from Ms Clayton and Mrs Garlick will also update you about the arrangements in Primary and Secondary more specifically. Mr Duncan Jacques, CEO of Exceed Academies Trust, has also written to parents to provide an update and overview on behalf of the Trust. I apologise that we are suddenly issuing so much information all at once, however, as you are aware, much of the guidance issued by government to schools has only recently been clarified and has changed many times over the course of lockdown and during the summer.

I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during this time as we have also been waiting for the complete government guidance on the full reopening of schools. The arrangements we are putting in place are aimed at reducing the risk to children, young people and adults and preventing the wider spread of Covid-19. I think we can all agree that children and young people have already spent too much time out of school, and we are working to ensure school is Covid safe on their return. Some of these arrangements will be inconvenient and others will be a challenge. There are likely to be teething problems, which may lead us the make further changes, sometimes with little notice. I would ask that you please continue to be patient during this time and we will ensure that we keep you as up to date as possible and keep any further changes to a minimum.

The following information relates to the arrangements we are making to ensure that Appleton is Covid-19 safe:

**Home Contact with Families**

Over the period of lockdown, parents and school staff have valued the regular contact between home and school and we want to keep as much of this benefit as we can. During Thursday 3 and Friday 4 September 2020, staff will call every one of our families to see how you are, answer any questions and make sure you understand the arrangements that have been put in place. Class teachers and form tutors will then call you again after school has been open for two weeks and we plan to continue with a phone call home every half term. We hope this will ensure that we can maintain the vital communication with parents and families.

**Online Access Questions**

During our phone call we will be asking questions about the technology you have in the home. We are not asking these questions to pry or judge families, these questions will be asked to ensure that we are able to support children, young people and families with home learning and to prepare for any future part or full closures where they to occur. It is likely that we will be holding online consultations and parent meetings in the new school year and we want to be able to support you with this as much as we possibly can. The first time you try to join an online meeting can be worrying and we also want to reassure you about using online applications so that this does not prevent you taking part. We will be asking what kind of device your child uses to get online for their learning e.g. laptop, chromebook, phone etc; how many people in the household share this device and we will ask information about your internet connection. This information will only be used internally in school, to support us in making sure we can communicate with you and that children can learn from home and access online lessons if this becomes necessary.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

You will have many questions about the opening of schools following the pandemic lockdown. I can assure you that Appleton Academy is in full compliance with the government guidance relating to opening schools and an extensive, approved risk assessment is in place. We take the safety of our children, young people, staff and community very seriously.

**What happens if there is a case of Covid-19?**

If your child or anyone within the family home becomes unwell with a new and persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia) then your child must not come to school and you should contact NHS 119 to access testing.

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with symptoms suggesting they may have Covid-19, they will be isolated and sent home immediately. You will be advised to follow ‘[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)’, which sets out that your child should self-isolate for at least 10 days and you should arrange a test to see if they have coronavirus (Covid-19). We will remain in contact with you so that we are aware of the result of this test.

If your child or anyone else within the family home has tested positive while not experiencing symptoms but then go on to develop symptoms during the isolation period, they should restart the 10-day isolation period from the day they develop symptoms. Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had those symptoms.

If a student or member of staff develops Covid-19 symptoms and/or tests positive, the school will report to and, follow the advice of the public health body in taking next steps. There is a possibility that this could mean a period of closure or isolation for a group or bubble.

**Why are children being arranged in bubbles?**

The bubble approach is being advised as best practice by health officials and the government to reduce the number of people your children and school staff come into contact with when they are at school. Social distancing is being used where possible, but we would not be able to get all children and young people into school unless we use bubbles.

Primary children will be in year group bubbles so that we are able to have small groups of children working with staff on focused learning tasks or to allow children to work in ability groups for phonics or maths for example. While children will remain with their class for most lessons, having a year group bubble means they will be able to mix with their friends at playtime and lunch, providing they are in the same year group bubble.

The Secondary bubbles are larger so that pupils can move to ability groups within their bubble. In Years 7 and 8, pupils will be organised into half year group bubbles. They will have a home room where most of their lessons take place but may move to a different room within their zone so that we can set work by ability for lessons such as maths. In Years 9, 10 and 11, the year group is a bubble, which allows young people to study their option subjects. A big change for Secondary pupils will be the home room and zones. Your children have been used to moving around the building for each lesson. However, for the foreseeable future, they will remain in their home room or a room in their bubble and the teacher will come to the room. The only exceptions will be the use of specialist rooms for some subjects e.g. food, science, art etc. These lessons will start in the home room and the pupils will then go to the specialist room for the lesson. After each lesson, the specialist room must be cleaned before the next group can use the room unless they are in the same bubble.

**Will my child see their friends?**

Your child will be able to see their friends at break and lunchtime provided they are in the same bubble. If your child’s friends are in a different bubble, they must not mix in school.

**Why are start and finish times being staggered?**

The guidance from the government makes it clear that start and finish times of the school day will need to be staggered to allow all pupils to get into school safely. Appleton Academy only has two gates for access to the site and over 1400 pupils. By having different start times, we can reduce the number of contacts pupils have with others outside their bubble and we can maintain social distancing when students move to and from rooms. We apologise to those parents who have children in different year groups who may be inconvenienced by children starting at different times but the measures we have put in place are the ones that most effectively allow the school to operate and provide education to all students.

**What happens if my child is late?**

Being on time for school is even more important than usual as the organisation of start and finish times is challenging as we have to prevent student groups from mixing. If your child arrives after the rest of their group has gone into school, they are late and will need to wait until a member of staff can escort them to their classroom or home room. If your child is late and the gates are closed, they will not be admitted until the next start time and they will need to wait in a designated area with you until the next bubble of pupils have entered the building before they are then escorted in. As you can imagine, this will be worrying for your child as well as taking adults/staff members away from working with pupils who have arrived on time.

If you are late to collect your child, they will be taken to a designated place at the front of the building until they are collected. They will need to wait until other bubbles have left before they can be escorted to the school gate. While we understand that there are rare occasions when journeys take additional time, this is disruptive to your child’s education and the organisation of school. If there are repeated occasions of late collection, we may need to consider charging a fee for childcare, as has been implemented in other circumstances in the past.

**I have a child who starts at 8:30am and another that starts at 9.00am, can I bring them both at the same time?**

We recognise that the staggered start times will be inconvenient to some families, however, pupils will only be admitted onto school grounds at their specified start time. Although we have tried to arrange common start times for family groups, this has not been possible for all pupils. If you bring both of your children at 8:30am, we will not admit your other child until the time they are due to come into school and you will be responsible for supervising them until that time.

**Does my child need to wear uniform?**

All pupils are expected to wear school uniform except on the days that they have PE. As the changing rooms will be closed, children and young people will need to come to school in their PE kit. Your child will find out their PE day when they return to school. The advice from government is that no additional washing is required for school uniform although it would be advisable to make sure your child changes out of their uniform when they get home.

Please ensure your child has a coat with them in school as they will be going out to play or at break and lunchtimes as normal and some lessons may take place outside.

**What can my child bring to school?**

In school your child will be provided with a resource pack so that they do not share equipment, which could lead to transmission of Covid-19 is someone has contracted the virus. The resource pack will include pens, pencils, min- whiteboards and a ruler, amongst other items. This resource pack will only be used by your child and although they will keep it in their classroom, they will take it to another room if they have a lesson in another part of school. As the water coolers will be out of use during this time, please make sure your child brings a filled water bottle with their name on. They will not be able to refill this during the day.

Primary children must only bring their book bag and a packed lunch (if they do not have school dinners). Secondary pupils can bring a small bag with a pencil case and their packed lunch (if they do not have school dinners). They must not bring additional items such as make up, games, deodorant, sweets or fizzy drinks into school. Pupils cannot bring toys or play equipment to school and this includes skipping ropes and footballs. Pupils will need to keep their belongings with them, and Secondary pupils will not be able to use their lockers as we cannot adequately ensure social distancing can take place in the areas of school where lockers are located.

**Does my child need to wear a face mask or face covering?**

When we began putting this letter together to provide you with information about the reopening of school, the government advice was that pupils should not be wearing a face mask in school. However, we expected this advice to change and it now has, as I’m sure you have seen in the media.

Primary aged children are not expected to wear a mask in school, however, as a parent you may choose for them to do so. This is more relevant for pupils in Year 6 than for younger children and is not recommended for children under the age of 5 years old. Children must be able to manage their own mask as adults can advise them on use but cannot touch masks. Please see the guidance below for support with face masks.

Pupils in secondary schools need to wear a mask outside the classroom in areas that have Covid-19 restrictions in place due to government intervention and are advised to do so even when they are in areas of school where specific restrictions are not in place. As Appleton Academy is a school in Bradford and there are currently additional local restrictions in place in our local authority area, all Secondary aged pupils must wear a mask when they are outside the classroom. They may also wear a mask while they are in the classroom if they wish. These instructions for the wearing of masks is similar to the rules on the mandatory wearing of face masks on public transport and in shops. These rules on the wearing of face masks while in school are likely to remain in place even if and when the local restrictions in Bradford are lifted as social distancing is difficult in school, particularly in areas such as corridors etc.

Your child’s mask must be a cotton mask/surgical style mask without ventilation devices. These are now available widely and multi packs are available online, many at low cost. Although masks come in a variety of designs now, masks must be free of logos or slogans and be appropriate for use in school.

* Pupils will need a clean mask each day, so masks need to be disposable or washable;
* While not wearing their mask, pupils will need to place their mask in a sealable bag such as a sandwich bag

Please watch this guidance from the World Health Organisation to support you and your children in the effective wearing of masks; <https://youtu.be/9Tv2BVN_WTk>. Pupils will also watch this guidance in school. Exceed Academies Trust is planning to buy a supply of disposable masks and bags for storing them, however, mask wearing is going to be the expectation for some time, so pupils will need their own.

**What will happen if my child refuses to wear a mask?**

We will work with you and your child to ensure that they understand why this measure is in place. There will be a very small minority of pupils who will be given an exemption due to their physical needs and we will have a risk assessment in place where this is the case. All other children will need to wear a mask and we will discuss consequences if they do not do so as part of setting out the reasons why they must do so, as refusal to wear a mask is likely to lead to them being seated away from their friends during social times.

I hope that all pupils and their parents will see that wearing a mask is for the health and safety of our community and a small inconvenience during this time.

**Will teachers wear masks?**

All Secondary aged pupils and all adults will be expected to wear a mask when they are outside the classroom or office spaces. The government guidance is for classrooms and teaching to be set up to maintain a 2 metre distance between adults and pupils. However, this is very difficult to manage if an adult needs to check work or work more closely with a pupil to support their learning. When teaching or working with pupils, teachers will be advised to wear a clear face shield so that pupils are able to hear their voices and see their faces. Adults in school will be able to wear masks when in the classroom if they choose to do so, providing it doesn’t have a negative impact on learning.

**What will classrooms and lessons look like?**

As far as possible we are trying to ensure that school looks and runs as normal as is possible. Classrooms in Primary will mostly be set up in the same way except there will be an area of 2 metres in the classroom for the class teacher and pupils will not be able to go into this area. Classroom resources will be reduced and children will have their own resource pack. This means that there won’t be a shared pencil pot in the middle of the

tables. Classrooms will have displays up as has always been the case as we use these to support learning.

In Secondary rooms the desks will be arranged in rows and the big change for Secondary pupils is that most of their lessons will take place in the same area or zone. For example, a pupil in Year 8 will have most of their lessons in one room, which is their home room but may go to one of two other rooms in the zone for maths as they will be taught in sets. Specialist lessons will start in the home room and pupils will only go to a specialist room for practical lessons.

The lesson structure for secondary pupils has also changed to enable us to offer all subjects. Lessons will either be 45 minutes or 90 minutes but lunch or break may take place part way through a lesson. Secondary pupils will finish slightly earlier on a Friday to allow staff to clean, quarantine and prepare resources for the following week. This is outlined further in the letter from Mrs Garlick.

There is additional signage and floor markings around the building so that we can ensure that pupils move around the building safely when they need to do so.

**Are parents and visitors allowed on school grounds?**

For the foreseeable future, parents will not be able to come onto the school grounds unless their child is in Nursery, Reception or Year 1. This is restricted to one adult per family group and parents must walk their child to the gate where a member of staff will take them to the classroom. Parents will not be able to wait around after dropping their child off and will then need to leave via the top gate. All parents and carers bringing their child onto the school site must wear a face mask.

There will be no access for vehicles on the school grounds at any time (other than for essential deliveries and visitors at assigned times). This means parents will not be able to drive onto site when dropping off or collecting children. We would encourage all parents and children to walk to school. If you do have to drive to the school, please do not use the roads around the school inappropriately or park in restricted areas.

If you need to speak to somebody about your child, please call the school office (01274 600550) or email [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk) in the first instance. Your message will be given to the member of staff concerned who will call you back as soon as they are able to. Where we can, this will be the same day but could be the next day if the member of staff concerned is teaching.

Only essential visitors will be permitted to come into school. They will be restricted to specific areas and must wear a face mask.

**What is happening at lunchtimes?**

I am very pleased that the school kitchen will be open again in September and we are all looking forward to welcoming back our catering team.

Children and young people will have a staggered lunch in their bubbles and can sit with friends provided they are in the same bubble. After each bubble has left the dinner hall, the area they have used must be thoroughly cleaned before another bubble can come in. Once they have finished their dinner, pupils will be able to play outside in an area zoned for their bubble. As you can imagine, this is the part of the day where space becomes very challenging and we have reduced the length of the lunch break to support this.

Our kitchen and catering company are preparing new menus which will reduce the choices on offer but still provide nutritional food for our children and young people. We are looking to introduce a pre-order system but this is taking some time and this is unlikely to be on offer when school starts in September. We will of course keep you up to date with this.

If you child prefers to have sandwiches, the kitchen does serve a variety of sandwiches which may save you making a packed lunch every morning. If your child does still choose to bring in a packed lunch, this will need to be in a disposable bag with your child’s name on and the bag will need to be thrown away at the end of lunch. Children and young people will not be able to bring a lunch box/bag during this time and the only lunchtime item that can go home at the end of the day is a water bottle.

Please be aware that we will not be running a breakfast club for the foreseeable future and the kitchen will not be open for students to go and purchase a drink or breakfast item before school. Break time will also be shorter so pupils won’t necessarily have time to eat before lunch so please ensure they have had breakfast before they come to school.

The cost of school dinners has not changed and we are still using ParentPay to allow parents to pay for dinners and track what your child has eaten. Just as in any other food establishment, you must pay in advance of eating. We cannot provide a free meal to a child if they are not entitled to receive one. A new system is being introduced to ensure families do not have dinner debt. I’m sure that you understand that school is funded using public money, budgets have not increased and the costs of additional cleaning and staffing for Covid-19 means that we are having to closely monitor how we use resources and we will not allow debt to be built up for school services that must be paid for.

We encourage all parents to investigate whether your child is entitled to free school meals and make use of this if they are. There is no public identification of children in school who have a free school meal and this has removed any embarrassment or stigma there may have been around free school meals many years ago. If you would like to check whether your child is entitled to free school meals, please contact us.

**Journeys to school**

The car park will remain closed during this period and you will not be able to use the entrance area to the car park adjacent to the school gates to drop off or turn around in your car. We are advising parents to walk to school with their children or use public transport. As 85% of our pupils live within the local community, most families are within walking distance of the Academy and most pupils who travel to us from other areas of Bradford do so on public transport.

If you do drive to school, please be mindful of our neighbours. Parking in the local area is restricted and parents should not park or drop off children in the areas with parking permits. If this becomes a problem, we may need to ask local enforcement officers to support the community with this.

**Will there be additional school cleaning?**

Appleton Academy is a very clean school due to our fantastic site staff and cleaners. Since the start of the lockdown, the cleaners have remained in work and worked tirelessly to deep clean every area within school. The cleaners have been issued with new guidance and routines to ensure the school remains as clean as possible. We will also have a team of cleaners who will regularly clean areas of school during the school day and we have employed additional staff to support this.

Any area that is a mixed-use area, such as the dinner hall, has been zoned for bubbles and will be thoroughly cleaned between use by each bubble, in line with the guidance from health professionals and the government. This is the same for specialist classrooms, for example, if a Year 11 bubble have had a lesson in a science lab, it will be thoroughly cleaned before a new bubble goes in.

Where possible, resources will be allocated to individual children and not shared within the classroom. Where individual resources such as calculators, PE or art equipment are needed, they will be used within the bubble only or quarantined after use. Quarantined resources will be cleaned and stored for a period of between 48 and 72 hours before they can be used again. Resources are signed in and labelled to indicate when they can next be used. All resources will be cleaned and quarantined over the weekend.

Classrooms will be cleaned more regularly during the school day and each room has a supply of resources such as antibacterial spray, hand sanitiser and cleaning materials. In addition to this, pupils will be asked to clean or sanitise their hands regularly throughout the day.

I hope the details outlined in this letter answer your queries and give you the confidence to send your children back to school when it reopens. We are very much looking forward to seeing all children and young people back in school, getting back to some of their usual routines. I know this will be challenging; however, Appleton Academy has fantastic children, staff and families and together we can make the changes work.

If you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone on 01274 600550 or by emailing [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk).

Yours faithfully



Ms. H Jones

Executive Headteacher