



GCA Parent/Carer Briefing

Monday 6/7/20

Good morning,

This week's Parent/Carer briefing is entirely given over to arrangements for September as the Government released their '[Guidance for full opening: schools](#)' last Thursday, and we have been digesting it and trying to find a workable GCA model since its release. Although there is a significant amount of planning still to do, I have tried to outline below, what we do now know about September opening which will help you and your child to make necessary plans and start to get used to the realities of a very different school approach from September.

What we do know, is that the 2020-21 academic year is going to be one of compromises and of working together – school will not look or feel like it normally does, however, we are determined to make the best of a difficult situation, and continue to make GCA a really safe place for all the children and adults and still an amazing place to go to school. We really want all children to be back.

Practicalities – I'm working on the principle that the arrangements outlined below will be in place for the entire academic year:

The school day

- There will be a big emphasis on a) children and adults not being on site if they have any Covid-19 symptoms, and b) making sure that hand washing/sanitising is done regularly throughout the day.
- School is going to be separated into zones – year group bubbles.
- Each year group bubble will have its own toilet (possibly gender neutral) and outside area for before school, breaks and lunchtimes.
- As far as is possible, from the point of arrival in school, children will remain in their year group bubble at all times and not mix with other year group bubbles.
- Although start times are very difficult for us to stagger because 45% of GCA children come in on buses from a 200 sq mile catchment, we are going to change our start time to 8.50 am for this period to allow for more of a steady stream of children coming on to site from 8.15 am at the earliest, and going directly to their bubble areas.
- Breakfast will, I hope, still be available from the main canteen – the queue will be socially distanced, and children will then go directly to their own bubble areas.
- Breaks and lunchtimes will be staggered – 3 year groups will have break at 10.00 am and lunch at 12.20 am, and 2 year groups will have break at 11.00 am and lunch at 1.20 pm
- The end of the school day will be staggered across a 15 minute period to allow year bubbles to exit the site separately.
- After school clubs will be year group specific but, I hope, will still be taking place.
- Lockers will not be in use.
- Normal school uniform expectations will be in place.
- Normal behaviour systems will be in place.



Lessons

Our academy trust has made the decision to further protect everyone on site, and the educational stability of the school (i.e. reducing chances of closure due to cross bubble Covid-19 cases) by imposing a restriction on the number of bubbles staff can teach across, and reducing their movement around school. Practically, this results in some compromises but, I believe, essential safety with no reduction in quality of education.

- In year 7, children will be taught in form groups for all subjects.
- In years 8 and 9, children will be taught in their science sets for all subjects.
- In years 10 and 11, children will be taught in their science sets for English, maths and science, and in their normal sets for their option subjects.
- In class TA support will be very difficult to achieve, and Mrs Davis is working on a workable support model.
- Because of the difficulties with changing facilities, children will be able to come to school once/week in their GCA PE kit – including their GCA sweatshirt and plain bottoms/leggings – not their own sportswear. If they have PE/Games on two separate days, one will either be PE theory, or an activity which can be done in school uniform.

Transport to and from school:

Clearly, we are doing everything we can to separate year groups in school as per the Government's guidance. However, as far as arriving and departing are concerned, we are in other people's hands – including yours as parents, and the bus companies/Lancashire County Council.

If children can make their own way to school on foot, by bike, or by car, please encourage them to do so and, to stay as separate from other year groups as they possibly can do.

Buses - although we are still waiting for a transport framework to be released, this is what we believe will be the case:

- LCC will be surveying parents about their transport requirements – we will forward this to you as soon as we have it.
- There is no additional capacity for LCC to put on more buses, therefore, as social distancing is not going to be possible, children will be required to wear a face covering on the school buses.
- Children will be encouraged to sit in their year bubbles.
- Children will require a bus pass to travel on a school bus – they won't be allowed on without one.
- We are told to assume that public transport buses from school, and possibly to school, will not pick children up due to social distancing requirements on public transport reducing their capacity.

I realise that many of the measures I have outlined could cause your child some anticipatory anxiety – what I would say is that I and the GCA staff are committed to making this work, and that GCA will still be a great place to come to – even if it will be a bit different for a while.

I will communicate any further information as I have it, including plans for the first week in September which will be intended to help children to further understand, and feel comfortable with, the arrangements we have put in place.



Please contact the school using the info@garstangcommunityacademy.com email address if you have any specific concerns or questions regarding September, and we'll do our best to answer them.

Best wishes

Mr Ashcroft