

2 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **RE: Plans for reopening Birmingham Ormiston Academy in June and July 2020**

At the beginning of my tenure as Principal of Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA), I had hoped to write to you all during more auspicious circumstances. It is customary, as an academic year reaches its end, to reflect on the successes of students at the academy – from academic achievement to the many wonderful showcases that capture our learners’ talents – as well as passing on my sincerest congratulations via a newsletter. This year, however, the Covid-19 outbreak has cast a long shadow and we are all learning to adjust to life under incredibly unfamiliar and unsettling circumstances.

Considering the challenges we face, I am grateful for my history with the academy. Having worked as a founding member of the Senior Leadership Team at BOA before my departure in 2018, I am incredibly excited to return and have the opportunity to lead an institution that provides its students with so many outstanding opportunities, both academically and creatively. As I am confident in my knowledge and understanding of the curriculum on offer at BOA, as well as the policies and practices of the academy, I can turn my attention to the immediate needs of our stakeholders. As parents and carers, you will want assurances that any gaps in learning will be quickly addressed in order for your children to achieve pleasing outcomes by the end of next academic year. As students, your children will want assurances that we have their best interests at heart and that they will not be disadvantaged by the impact of Covid-19 on their education. In addition, your children’s experiences at BOA should mirror their expectations. When we return, we will work hard to re-establish our sense of community and to nurture the talents of our students, who will be given the opportunities they deserve to demonstrate both their academic and creative abilities.

#### **Reopening BOA this academic year:**

I know you will have questions regarding the remainder of this academic year and any plans to reopen BOA to larger cohorts of students in years 10 and 12. The advice published on 25 May 2020 by the Department for Education (DfE) states that the predominant form of education for the remaining weeks of this academic year is remote learning. In addition, secondary schools and academies have been instructed to reopen from 15 June 2020 onwards to offer some form of face-to-face support to a quarter of their students in years 10 and 12 on any one day, as a way to supplement remote learning. At BOA, this would mean accommodating 46 students in Year 10 and 82 students in Year 12 in the academy building on any one day, thereby asking learners to attend BOA once a week to meet with their teachers. It is imperative that we adhere to guidance on social distancing and smaller numbers of students in classrooms at any one time, as well as minimising the ‘mixing’ of different ‘bubbles’ of students. Any decisions to move forward with plans to reopen from 15 June onwards must also be guided by advice on the use of public transport, which should be minimised in order to prevent students mixing with other groups of people outside of the academy.

#### **Remote Learning:**

It is of great importance that we continue to make the most of remote learning, especially as it is the predominant form of education for students in years 10 and 12 across the country. Firstly, subject teachers at BOA have been asked to ensure all students are engaging with the online resources. It is essential that all students are at similar positions – as far as curriculum coverage is concerned – as we

near the summer break. For this reason, subject teachers have been asked to use student responses and mini-assessments to gauge knowledge and understanding, and we will also use this information to complete an end-of-year report in July. As we move further into June and enter July, the learning activities that teachers devise will be in response to the work completed so far, with a view to consolidate learning and address any misconceptions. We will be in touch if we have any concerns over students and their lack of engagement with remote learning activities.

### **Face-to-face support sessions:**

If we decide that it is safe, both for learners and for members of staff, to open BOA over the forthcoming weeks, it is important for me to outline the options that are open to us.

#### **On-site support for Year 10**

Given the guidance above, we will establish 'static' classes of no more than 15 students, who will receive face-to-face support from teachers of their core GCSE subjects (English, Mathematics and Science) and for GCSE Citizenship Studies. Students will remain in the same classroom with the same peers for these lessons, and will be assigned the same set of subject teachers for the days that they attend. To minimise 'mixing' on the academy site, GCSE option subjects and the arts pathway subjects will continue to be taught via remote learning platforms and virtual classrooms. As mentioned, students will be asked to attend the academy one day a week, to receive up to four x 1-hour lessons in the subjects mentioned above.

#### **On-site support for Year 12**

Given the guidance from the DfE, we aim to establish 'static' classes of no more than 15 students, who will receive face-to-face support from teachers of their arts pathway subjects. Students will remain in the same classroom (or studio) with the same peers for these lessons, and will be assigned the same set of subject teachers for the days that they attend. To minimise 'mixing' on the academy site, A-Level subjects will continue to be taught via remote learning and virtual classrooms. As mentioned, students will be asked to attend the academy one day a week, to receive 4 hours of lessons in their chosen pathway subject.

*NB: Please remember that face-to-face support sessions are a supplement to and not a replacement for remote learning.*

#### **Tentative Dates:**

While considering any plans to reopen BOA, my main concern is not the health and safety of students in the academy building itself. Please rest assured that we have carried out a thorough risk assessment and are in the process of adapting the environment in order to minimise the risks of transmission or infection. Instead, we must consider whether public transport enables students to travel to and from BOA in a safe manner. We must monitor the efficiency of public transport as the lockdown is eased and businesses begin to reopen, especially as many of our students travel long distances on buses and trains. Tentatively, I will look to reopen BOA from 29 June 2020 onwards but only if I am confident that students are able to travel to and from the academy in a safe manner. We will also operate a reduced academy day, with students arriving for 10am and leaving the academy by 2.30pm. I will keep you updated over my decision-making in due course and will share all relevant *Health & Safety* guidance relating to on-site education, should we open.

**Alternative provision:**

If we decide not to open the academy for the remainder of this term, we will continue to ensure that students receive a combination of online learning activities and online support sessions with their teachers. We will also ask form tutors to hold an extended online meeting with each of their tutees in order to touch base and help students with any concerns.

*NB: Details of online support sessions will be published in due course.*

**Preferences:**

Guidance from the DfE on preparing for reopening asks all schools and academies to gauge how many students are likely to attend any on-site face-to-face sessions. To assist us with our decision-making and planning, please complete the following short survey, which can be found here:

- [Year 10 Face to Face Support Sessions](#)
- [Year 12 Face to Face Support Sessions](#)

**Children of key workers and vulnerable students:**

Please note that we are open to children of key workers and to vulnerable students. Due to the distances that our learners travel, parents and carers have elected for their children to remain at home up until this point. We are, of course, duty bound and (most importantly) happy to organise provision for students who fall into these categories. Please contact the Pastoral Team if you find your circumstances have changed and you would like your child to attend BOA.

Similarly, if any student at BOA needs to contact their Head of House (or Mr Pitt – Assistant Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead) regarding any pastoral care issues, please make contact through [Pastoral@boa-academy.co.uk](mailto:Pastoral@boa-academy.co.uk)

As I bring this letter to an end, I appreciate that my first communication with you all has been rather detailed. That said, I do hope I have offered assurances that your child's education and wellbeing are at the forefront of any decisions I take. Please contact me on the email at the bottom of this letter if you would like to share any thoughts.

On a related matter, I do hope I get the opportunity to meet with you all in the near future – once it is safe to do so – and please stay safe in the meantime.

Yours truly,



**Alistair Chattaway**  
Principal