

29th March 2018

Re: End of Spring Term Update

Dear Parents & Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm writing with an update on various matters ahead of our third (and hopefully final) term in our current base on Scrubs Lane. It's a long letter, but all of interest I hope. Also included in this envelope is Issue 10 of the INTREPIDUS Magazine which I hope all parents will flick through, and some other informational updates regarding services on offer in the community. The next letter you will receive from us will be your child's **Spring Term Report**, detailing the results of the important assessments they took last week. These will be sent home with your children shortly after the holiday and we will text you as normal to say they are coming home.

Planned Re-Occupation of KAA1: September 2018

The general view from parents, students and staff appears to be we would very much like to start next year back in our building on Silchester Road. Grenfell is due to be fully wrapped by June, and whilst there may be some challenges in being based next to the tower, people seem to feel that the benefits of being back in our beautiful building far outweigh the potential disadvantages. I have always said we will go back at **the right time and in the right way**, and it feels like that time may be the start of the new academic year. However, this is not a straightforward issue, and also not one we fully control. Some further background:

- I'm conscious parents will have questions and concerns, for example around how we will support students who may be upset by being close to the tower, or the possible noise and dust which the eventual demolition will cause. I have offered some detail on these two issues below, but the main message I want to get across here is that **Governors and I are thinking very hard about these issues too**. We are planning to protect students from any adverse effects of returning and, instead, make it as positive an experience as possible. If we can't guarantee students will be safe and happy, and educational standards will be sustained and enhanced, then we will remain at KAA2 for a second year until we can guarantee this. If, after reading this update, parents have questions for me personally, **please come to a Q&A session I am holding here at KAA2 on Tuesday 17th April at 6.30p.m.** Equally, if you are unable to come, or happy to wait for further detail, then rest assured that I will be sending further updates over the summer term. We are going to hold re-orientation events for any parent who wants to come and see the building ahead of full re-occupation, most likely in July after the exams, so you will have a question to ask any questions at that point also, and see the building for yourselves.

- We are going to install a new playground and a 4G Astro Pitch before we return (due to damage in the fire) and also create some new small offices / breakout rooms that will be suitable for students to receive therapy and counselling. We can get this done by August, however if something did change (e.g. the condition of the tower deteriorated) then this could affect our programme. This is unlikely, but not impossible, hence me highlighting it now. We are also considering installing some window graphics in the classrooms overlooking the tower (see below).
- Like all schools locally, we are reviewing our fire strategy and evacuation plans in the light of what happened, and Governors have asked for an independent assessment from fire risk experts before we fully re-occupy the building, to take place shortly. If needed we will make improvements - for example we may add more fire escape signage. The independent assessment will be placed on the website for any parent who wishes to view it, and will cover any issues relating to cladding (though as I have explained the KAA cladding is very different from that used on Grenfell). There really is no cause for concern here, these are just sensible precautions which allow us to give full reassurance to parents, students and staff that everyone is 100% safe.

How we plan to manage the move home

- As you would expect, we are in regular dialogue with the team involved in wrapping and demolishing the tower (*note: we do not know at this stage when demolition might begin, and it could be some time before the tower is fully down*). The good news is the team are telling us that they do not anticipate the noise and dust from demolition will interfere with the school running smoothly. Clearly there will be *some* noise and dust, but the demolition would take place entirely behind the wrapping, and evidence suggests it would not prevent either the school or local residents from continuing to occupy the buildings around the tower. They have committed to handling any demolition as sensitively as possible for obvious reasons, so overall we think this issue can be managed.
- For various reasons we think we will need to use the building slightly differently when we are back, and open up some of our internal spaces and the Art Terrace overlooking Silchester Road at break and lunch. We are planning on holding “lunchtime enrichments” and having supervised activities in the sports hall and theatre each lunch break. We are also currently planning to move away from outdoor line-up. These changes mean that any student who doesn’t want to be near the tower during the school day has the option not to be.

- Our beautiful building is enough of a treat in itself, and the new playground and 4G pitch will be welcome additions, but we are also considering adding window graphics to the classrooms overlooking the tower (example below). I want to talk more to students and staff about this, as they may feel it is too much, but it's illustrative of the adjustments we are considering to protect students from any adverse effects of going back and make it a positive process.



- Moving home could be an emotional experience for some students and we are going to make the transition as smooth as possible. Any student who wants to will be able to visit KAA1 in advance if needed to re-orientate themselves - in small groups, with therapists, whatever they want. The vast majority of students are excited and eager to get back, but some will have understandable reservations. Every individual student will have a unique set of emotions around this, and we pledge to look after every one of them as individuals.

I'll finish this section by just emphasising my personal commitment to continue to care for students throughout this period as best we possibly can. Whilst there are challenges ahead, I think we are all starting to realise that, once the tower is wrapped, it will not be nearly as difficult to look at as it has been, and that we can adjust and move forward. Moving home will, of course, be a big part of getting back to normal, not just for students and staff but for our community, who are actively calling for us to come back. As I have said previously, I very much hope that the maturity, compassion and resilience that KAA students have shown since Grenfell will now become permanent features of our school culture. In fact, in many ways, we think they already have.



Uniform

A much more day-to-day notice now about uniform. This has slipped of late, and I would ask all parents to support us with the points below. There is a **proven link between smart uniform and standards of behaviour and learning** (hence our focus) so this is in all our interests:

- Jewellery of any form is not allowed – this includes ear studs – students will be asked to remove them and the items confiscated.
- Trainers are not allowed under any circumstances. If a student's shoes are wearing out, then a new pair should be purchased before they fall apart. Thank you. If a student comes to school in trainers, they will complete work in internal exclusion until new shoes can be bought.
- Jackets, scarves and hats must be plain black, grey or blue, and not carry any sports logos (Nike, Adidas etc).
- All bags must be KAA school bags, which are available at School Uniform Direct, 343 North End Road (opposite Co-Op and near to Superdrug), London, SW6 1NN (or buy online at: www.schooluniformdirect.co.uk/schools/119/kensington-aldridge-academy)
- The KAA PE Jumper will be compulsory from September 2018, so parents may wish to buy it now. Students are only permitted to wear plain (unbranded) navy or black tracksuit bottoms/jumper, or plain leggings under their KAA skort/shorts. Students who do not have correct PE uniform will receive a detention.

All of the above is, of course, covered in the Home / School Agreement parents signed before their child joined KAA, so I am sure will not come as a surprise. Thank you for your support.

Free School Meals (FSM)

Amazingly, there is **half a million pounds in FSM funding that goes unclaimed** every year in Kensington and Chelsea, a large part of which could come to KAA and pay for extra text books, teachers, trips and more resources that would benefit our students. If you think you may be eligible for FSM and are not currently receiving them, please visit www.kaa.org.uk/free-school-meals. This is especially important if your child is now in Y10, as if they used to claim FSM in primary but don't currently, then we may lose the historic pupil premium funding we have received for them in Y7-10. Thank you.



Term Dates

Our 2018/19 Term Dates are below and also on the website of course. I wanted to highlight that from next year we are moving from 185 to 180 school days per year (with 15 not 10 teacher training and planning days). I appreciate that this change may cause some concern for parents, but it was not a decision that was taken lightly, and one that, we are convinced, is the best thing for students. Some background thinking:

- We have fewer days than other state schools (though not independent schools) but **each day at KAA is longer**. This year we finish at 3.45, with enrichment after that, whereas most other schools in RBKC finish at 3 o'clock or even earlier. This means we have no less time for learning overall.
- The extra five days will give us the opportunity to do targeted intervention work with GCSE and A-Level students – it is not possible to do this kind of work on a normal school day.
- These days give our teachers the time to train and plan so that, during term time, they can deliver consistently excellent lessons and assessments, day in day out. We expect a lot from KAA teachers, but need to give them the space to deliver at this standard. The success of this approach is clearly evidenced in our December 2017 Ofsted report, which talks of the “exceptional” standards in the school, and the very high levels of teacher retention we have (parents who have been with us for several years may have noticed KAA has unusual stability in staffing). We also, of course, have never closed for a snow day yet, and were the only RBKC school to stay open throughout the Beast from the East.
- We will continue to set extensive holiday work in the form of stretch projects and pre-reading, so non-school days are used productively. We also offer a range of activities in the holidays – e.g. RBKC Play Service - which support parents with childcare and provide enriching opportunities for students (*note, this is much easier if we are back in our building*).

I hope this all makes sense. If any parent would like to raise this with me at the **Q&A session at 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday 17th April** I would be very happy to hear their views.

Autumn Term 2018

Aut1 term starts: Wednesday 5th September

Aut1 term ends: Friday 19th October

Half term break: Monday 22nd October to Friday 2nd November

Aut2 term starts: Monday 5th November

Aut2 term ends: Wednesday 19th December





Spring Term 2019

Spr1 term starts: Monday 7th January

Spr1 term ends: Friday 15th February

Half term break: Monday 18th February to Monday 25th February

Spr2 term starts: Tuesday 26th February

Spr2 term ends: Friday 5th April

Summer Term 2019

Sum1 term starts: Wednesday 24th April

Bank Holiday (school closed for students): Monday 6th May

Sum1 term ends: Friday 24th May

Half term break: Monday 27th May to Tuesday 4th June

Sum2 term starts: Wednesday 5th June

Sum2 term ends: Friday 19th July

I'll close by just thanking all parents again for all the work they do to support KAA day in, day out. It is hugely appreciated, and I know I speak for all staff when I say how happy we are to continue to serve this wonderful community in North Kensington. I hope you all have a lovely, restful holiday and I look forward to seeing all students bright and early on Tuesday 17th April.

With best wishes,

David Benson
Principal