

Wednesday 15th July 2020

Re: Arrangements for the new academic year

Dear Parent / Carer,

As you will have seen in the media, **all students are returning to school in September** and **attendance will be compulsory** again. This is fantastic news, as we can all see the impact lockdown has had on our students' emotional, social and academic wellbeing. We can't wait to have everyone back.

There will be adjustments we need to make to ensure students and their families, as well as our staff, are kept safe. The major adjustment is that, for at least the first half of the autumn term, **Year 7 & 8 will be based at our temporary "KAA2" site**. For those not familiar with KAA2, it is a fully-functional, purpose-built temporary school, just under a mile from our original building "KAA1". We occupied KAA2 for the academic year 17/18 after Grenfell, and the school is maintained as a contingency in the event we need to move there during deconstruction of the tower (though to be clear, I think that unlikely, as all indications are Grenfell could be brought down carefully without local residents and businesses having to move). KAA2 is located on Scrubs Lane next to Burlington Danes School, as you can see from this map.



I would, of course, have much preferred to communicate this decision with better notice. However, as I hope parents can appreciate, the government guidance came out *just over one week ago*, and we have been working flat out to develop our plans since then. Yesterday we received the necessary approval, so I am writing with the maximum possible notice (even if that feels like very little).

I understand this news may come as a shock to some parents, and you could have questions. Others, perhaps, saw some use of KAA2 coming. For new Year 7 students who are concerned about travelling to school, or for those with siblings who will now be split between KAA1 and KAA2, I can see it may cause immediate issues. I have therefore set out below the reasons why **our staff, our Governing Body (including our Parent Governors), our sponsors and our local authority are all convinced this is by far the best option** - both Year 7 and 8 *and* the other year groups.

Year 7 & 8 temporarily at KAA2 – Key Reasons

Under government guidance, schools are required to **avoid students mixing between groups as much as possible**. Generally speaking, students should stay in the same class group and certainly the same year group (these are sometimes called “bubbles”). There are occasions where students will mix between years – two siblings from different years who live in the same house, for example – but these should be rare and avoided if possible. The guidance also states we must try to **maintain social distancing, particularly for adults** who are at greater risk from the virus (and, most importantly, for vulnerable adults).

To minimise year group mixing and allow for distancing, schools are taking a range of steps, for example;

- Teaching all practical subjects – Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Design Technology, Food etc – in standard, non-specialist classrooms, so students can stay in one room and their teachers can come to them. This means either a curriculum that is all theory and no practical work, or trying to make do by bringing a trolley of (for example) Art materials to a non-Art classroom. It also means students remain in one single room all day.
- Having 3 double lessons each day, instead of 6 single lessons, thereby reducing the amount students need to move around the building.
- Staggering lessons, breaks and lunches, so canteens, corridors and playgrounds don’t become overcrowded. This makes timetables much less efficient, and reduces staff capacity for things like team teaching, intervention or enrichment.
- Removing some subjects from the curriculum, due to the challenges of teaching a full range of subjects whilst maintaining bubbles and distancing.

Each of these measures involve significant compromises to students’ education. Requiring students to drop subjects, or not access specialist teaching rooms, or contend with crowded corridors - these are not decisions we would take lightly. A crowded building is also less safe for students and staff. Because we are in the very fortunate position of having a second school, complete with science labs, dance and drama studios and everything else you could ask for, we do not need to make such compromises. **Put simply, moving Y7 & 8 temporarily to KAA2 allows us to maximise the safety of students and staff and preserve the full curriculum for all.**

Clearly this arrangement is not perfect and involve compromises too. For example, travel for some students may be longer (though for some it will be a shorter journey), and our school culture and ethos would benefit from having everyone together (though there are things we can do to keep culture strong in both sites). However, this split site is only temporary, and we will bring students back as soon as new guidance allows. The latest indications are this could be at the start of the summer term, but hopefully it will be sooner, and we can all see how guidance changes quickly.

A final point of reassurance, for those parents who are not familiar with KAA2, is that the facilities and staffing there fully replicate what we have at KAA1. This includes a full SEN and counselling team, for example, alongside the specialist teachers and leadership staff. I will be there myself every week, and a Vice Principal will be onsite each day, alongside Directors of Learning and other senior staff.

In making this decision I have spoken to a number of other Headteachers, educationalists and Local Authority officials. Every one of them has said, were they to be in our position, they would be doing the same thing. This government guidance is difficult to implement, and if you are wondering why KAA is doing it this way and others are not, it is because we are in a unique position to do so. We are in consultation with other primary and secondary schools about using separate areas of the KAA2 site (it can accommodate 1300 students, but we will only have 400 there) as we want others to benefit from what we consider to be a community asset, if this is possible.

Please excuse the detail I have gone into above - I hope you can see why I would want to set this out so fully. If, having read the above, you would like to speak to me personally, I will be holding Parent Q&A sessions after school here at KAA1 this week, **starting today**. I have allocated different year groups to different days, but people should feel welcome to come to any session. I am very happy to have as much dialogue about this as I can, as are my team. In the event that I cannot be at one of these due to other commitments, there will be a Vice Principal to lead it on my behalf.

Parent Q&A Sessions

- *Y6 students joining in September* - **Wednesday 15th July, 6 pm**
- *Current Y7 students, who will be in Y8 next year* - **Thursday 16th July, 5 pm**
- *All other students* – **Friday 17th July, 4 pm**

The sessions will be held in the Theatre with social distancing, and we will record them and add them to our website too for anyone who cannot attend. It is also possible to call and speak to me or one of my team on 02073135800 or email us at info@kaa.org.uk to discuss this.

I appreciate the end of term is fast approaching, and people may want time to digest this before we speak. With that in mind, I want to **invite all Y7&8 parents to a full tour of KAA2 at 5 pm on Wednesday 26th August, shortly before term starts**. I'm confident that once people see it they will be reassured. At this event there will also be a chance to meet your child's Director of Learning and our Special Educational Needs staff.

I'm grateful for the trust parents in *all year groups* will place in us over our arrangements for September. This is an unusually busy time for the school, and I can promise that if parents go with this decision at least initially, then my team will work through any specific concerns you have in September as they arise.

I will send a separate End of Term letter later this week, but will leave it there for now. You may wish to read a bit more about the KAA2 facility if you are not familiar with it (www.kaa.org.uk/students-parents/kaa2).

With best wishes,



David Benson
Principal