



17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carers,

As I reflect on the term that has passed, it is fair to say that we have faced challenging circumstances since September. Like in schools up and down the country, we have had individuals testing positive for Covid-19 and a number of students, significantly Year 11, have been forced to self-isolate in order to maintain their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others around them. Despite these challenges however, Starbank rose to the challenge and stayed true to the STAR Academies' three key priorities: *'Keeping our pupils safe, happy, and well'*; *'Achieving academic excellence'* and *'Looking after our staff and community'*.

## Keeping our pupils safe, happy and well.

The start of the 2020-21 academic year has been positive, overall. The return to school in September after 6 months of lockdown and the introduction of our 'zoning' or 'year bubbles' model presented its own challenges and benefits. Splitting the school into what is effectively 5 mini schools, has proven to be popular with staff and students alike. The restructuring of the school day, to accommodate separate breaks and lunchtimes for each year group, as well as staggered start and end times to the school day has provided a much calmer school environment, and the challenge of 'managing' almost nine hundred students at one time has been removed and replaced with the luxury of 'looking after' no more than one or two year groups, at any one time. This has been supported by the behaviour system which have been well received by staff and students alike.

Our Covid-19 preventative measures have proven successful and there have only been a few incidences of Covid-19 across the school. Effective close-contact monitoring and swift responses when called upon has ensured that only a minimal number of students and staff have had to isolate as a result of being in close contact with effected peers and colleagues.

As a school, we could not have managed this term without the ongoing positive support of parents and I would like to thank you, sincerely, for helping us all offer the best for our students. In particular, I would like to thank all parents for their swift and decisive responses when following government guidance to manage tests/symptoms and encouraging your child when they have required to learn from home.

## Reporting positive COVID-19 cases including track and trace over the holiday period.

As Principal I am responsible for supporting Public Health England by facilitating contact tracing for 6 days after the final day of teaching. In the event of a positive case being identified between Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December-Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December, school will contact families to inform them and explain they must begin a period of self-isolation for ten days from the point of the call.

This is not the news anyone wants over the holiday; I am asking parents to be extra vigilant as we approach the last couple of days in school. Thank you for your continued support and **please help us to reduce the spread of cases: do not send your child to school if they or any member of your family is showing symptoms.**



During the Christmas break may I ask that parents are aware of the following information from the Department for Education (DFE):

1. If your child develops symptoms over the holiday, you must book a test immediately.
2. If your child receives a positive test result over the holiday, (between 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December), you must inform the school immediately by email: [covidresults@starbank.staracademies.org](mailto:covidresults@starbank.staracademies.org)

## Spring Term 2021 – Key dates:

### Return to school:

- **Monday 04/01/2021** – Teacher Training inset day. No students on site.
- **Tuesday 05/01/2021** – All students, Years 7-11, return to school. Normal start times apply.

### Student progress report and virtual Parents' Evening:

- Week beginning **11/01/2021**: student progress report will be issued years 7-11.
- **Thursday 21/01/2021**: virtual parent's evening. Form tutors will either book direct Zoom/Teams meeting with parents or book a telephone conversation to discuss reports.

## Achieving Academic Excellence.

### Remote Learning and Blended Learning:

During the first lockdown period from March, you will be aware that our teachers set work for students to complete on MS Teams. As a school, we are always striving to deliver the best possible educational experience for our students, regardless of whether that learning occurs in school or remotely.

During the autumn term, when our students have needed to self-isolate, they have had access to a brand-new Year Group Remote Learning MS Teams page. Within this page are channels for all subject areas. Our teachers have worked incredibly hard to master new technology to be able to deliver simultaneous teaching. This has allowed our remote students to join in live lessons with their year group. We have been really pleased to see a much improved engagement from students learning remotely from home and we thank those parents involved for supporting their child with this new way of learning.

We know your child has the best learning experience when their teacher is teaching them. In the current climate of the pandemic, this can pose challenges. Throughout the second half of this term, to reduce the number of supply lessons each child experiences and to ensure quality provision, we have held days of 'collapsed timetables' where our students have been taught by our teachers 'beaming' into our classrooms. This has meant that staff who have had to self-isolate have been able to continue teaching their classes, despite not being physically in school.

As we move into the new year, should any child need to self-isolate and learn remotely, this current provision will continue to ensure no child falls behind. We have supported Year 11 to access online learning through the distribution of 38 laptop loans to students: Y10 will be recipients and will benefit from the next wave when they are issued.

## Expectations on returning to school on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

### Expectations on punctuality to school:

All students are due back in school from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January. They should arrive and attend line-up as normal, according to the usual schedule. A prompt arrival and effective line-up allows students to enter the building on time. Expected arrival and entry times are:

- Year 10 and Year 11: **arrive 08:15, enter school 08:20**
- Year 9 and Year 8: **arrive 08:20, enter school 08:25**
- Year 7: **arrive 08:25, enter school 08:30**

## Expectations on attitude, conduct and behaviour:

It is important that students arrive at school with the correct attitude and maturity. School is here to help students progress from children into young adults, and that includes developing individual maturity, independence and enough self-respect to make their progress their primary focus.

We expect all students to:

- Arrive punctually to lesson.
- Ensure they are prepared to learn – that they are responsible for their own equipment and books,
- Maintain focus and engage well with all tasks set, to best support their own progress.
- Treat all stakeholders, staff and students alike, with the same respect they wish for themselves.

By maintaining these behaviours as detailed above, students will develop the habits of successful people and will ensure their best chances of success. **It is important students accept that they are responsible for their own behaviour and conduct within school.**

## Expectations on school uniform:

I would like to thank parents and students who make every effort to keep to our uniform regulations. Please see below for guidance on our school uniform. Students currently not in the correct PE kit must wear plain black top and jogging bottoms.

<h3>Secondary School Uniform</h3> <p>Academy Black Blazer with Academy Logo    Academy Black V-Neck Jumper with Academy Logo (Optional)    Plain Long-Sleeve White Shirt or Blouse    Academy Striped Tie</p>				<h3>PE Kit</h3> <p>Academy Black Long Sleeve Polo Shirt    or    Academy Black Short Sleeve Polo Shirt    Academy Black 1/4 zip Midlayer Sports Top (Optional)</p> <p>Academy Tracksuit Bottoms    or    Academy Black Shorts    Academy Black Sports Socks</p> <p>Trainers (No fashion shoes/pumps)    Plain Black or White Ankle/Trainer Socks    Plain Black One-piece Headscarf (Optional)</p>		
<h3>Girls</h3> <p>Black straight knee-length skirt    or    Black Tailored Trousers*    or    Academy Full-Length Black Skirt (Optional)</p> <p>Black opaque tights or socks    Plain black formal shoes (no trainers)</p>		<h3>Boys</h3> <p>Black Tailored Trousers*</p> <p>Black Socks    Plain Black formal shoes (no trainers)</p>				
<h3>Headwear and Accessories</h3> <p>Academy Plain Black headscarf with Academy Logo (Optional)    Plain Bag    Plain Coat**</p> <p>* Skinny fit or jean style trousers are not permitted ** Denim or leather jackets, or those with slogans or logos, are not permitted</p>				<h3>Personal Appearance</h3> <p>Long nails, nail varnish and make-up are prohibited. No jewellery other than a wristwatch may be worn (unless otherwise agreed on grounds of faith). Hair must be kept tidy. Extremes of length or style are not permitted (unless otherwise agreed on grounds of faith). Head coverings may be worn for religious purposes only. Any head covering worn for religious values should be in the colours advised by the academy.</p>		

A continued reminder that for students who are still wearing the previous Starbank uniform, that the school still has available stock for purchase at reduced prices.

## Looking after our Staff and Community.

### Star Service: supporting our community through our Festive Winter programme.

An important aspect of belonging to our Star community is that we embrace the four key values of Service, Team-Work, Ambition and Respect. We recognise that there is more to becoming a successful future adult than lessons and exams alone, and so it is important to us that we provide opportunities for all our stakeholders to serve their community – especially around Christmas, which is a traditional period for charitable actions and thinking of others.

Our Festive Winter programme consisted of four opportunities for students to serve their communities through collaboration and team-work:

- **Festive hamper appeal:** Tutor groups worked together to provide hampers for 25 residents of the Panel Croft Retirement Village, Birmingham. Each form personalised their hampers to suit their named recipient and we hope to bring some cheer to others through our actions.
- **Food for All:** students from Years 7, 8 and 11 collected and donated food parcels for the Homeless 1 charity, which supports individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The students gathered together enough food for almost forty packages between them, which will be well-received over the festive period.
- **Christmas raffle:** to be held on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, all funds raised as voluntary contributions will be split between Birmingham Childrens Hospital and Starbank's Families in Need.
- **Non-uniform fund raising activity:** to be held on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, students and staff alike can wear their own clothes (and ideally a Christmas jumper) for the price of a ticket, being sold at £1 per ticket. We are hoping to raise £900 which will be donated to the Children in Need charity.

## Farewell and Congratulations.

### Farewell:

It is always sad when we wave goodbye to colleagues. This term Miss Garcia-Lorenzo (Teacher of Spanish) will be moving on, having accepted a promoted post elsewhere. Whilst we are truly saddened to see her go, we know Miss Garcia-Lorenzo is excited by the fresh challenges of a new role and we wish her every success in her new position as Head of Faculty.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish her well for the future and to thank her for her effort, care and hard work over the past three years at Starbank.

### Congratulations - staff:

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs Morgan for securing the role of Impact Centre Manager. Mrs Morgan has been a positive part of our Starbank team for some time and has shown true dedication towards our students and helping them become the best versions of themselves, resulting in this new position: she is fully deserving of a promoted position and we hope you will join us in celebrating her success.

### Congratulations – Year 11 students:

I also want to publicly recognise the continued maturity, hard-work, tenacity, resilience and independence that has been shown by Year 11 students over the past term, under circumstances more challenging than anyone could have imagined.

As a student group, Year 11 have embraced the return to school whole-heartedly and have been superbly mature with regards their focus in lesson, their attendance and engagement at additional intervention lessons, their conduct and levity through their Pre-Public Examination period and with their conduct around school as role models to our younger students. As they begin to look ahead towards Post 16 and complete their applications for their next places elsewhere, it is important that we recognise their efforts to date have

been fantastic. However, it is also important that we emphasise the need to maintain these efforts as we enter the final countdown towards their official examinations in the Summer. With roughly twenty school weeks remaining until the onset of GCSEs in June 2021, Year 11 must capitalise on every opportunity to develop and further their potential – the harder they work now, the greater the reward in the Summer.

We maintain exceedingly high expectations for Year 11 because we know that they will meet our expectations.

### **Congratulations – Year 7 students:**

It is also important that we recognise the enormously positive start to school that Year 7 have enjoyed. Despite being taught in their form rooms (owing to Covid regulations) and having started Secondary under the most challenging circumstances possible, they have made the absolute most of their first term and there is much to be proud of in their first few weeks. Their positivity and willingness to engage with learning serves them well and, providing they can maintain these standards and attitude, they may even surpass the standards set by current Year 11 in a few years to come...

### **A final word from the Principal.**

This has been a term that has presented singular challenges, yet despite these barriers Teaching and Learning at the school are improving rapidly. The introduction of a new teaching and learning framework at Trust level has demanded closer scrutiny of all faculties and their delivery which is helping us to implement our ambitious curriculum successfully.

Academic standards, following a 6-month shutdown, have taken an initial 'hit' but comprehensive testing and increased intervention, coupled with more efficient teaching, is enabling students to make up lost ground and we are confident that the latest assessments will reflect the significant gains students have made since returning in September. The school curriculum continues to meet the Trust's expectations and supports the improvements in academic standards.

Finally, we are aware that the coming terms may well present additional trials and challenges, but the school is well placed to address anything that is put in front of it. At Starbank, we continue to strive to offer our students an education that is second to none.

I wish you a happy and restful Christmas and a prosperous and healthy new year.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Gaetano Ferrante  
Secondary Headteacher