



Date: 16th August, 2020

Information for current Secondary Stage Parents on school re-opening plans

Dear Grammar Parents and Guardians,

It is with great pleasure that I am able to write to you and welcome you to the start of the new academic year 2020-2021. This letter aims to outline our re-opening plans and welcoming your child/children back to Grammar School for the Autumn term. Our return plans are in accordance and partnership with KHDA who have provided guidelines and useful advice as we move forward with a consistent and effective approach to keeping everyone at school safe and healthy once we re-open.

It is a huge privilege to be joining the Grammar School team as the new Head of Secondary. I am joining you after thirteen years of successful education leadership in Dubai and certainly looking forward to meeting you and your children. Knowing that we will be reintroducing students back into school life is really exciting, especially with our blended learning approach, the introduction of 'High Performance Learning' and our continued focus on the happiness and wellbeing of our students.

The KDHA should be commended for their comprehensive opening-up guidance for schools provided in their document titled "Protocols for re-opening private schools in Dubai" and available on-line to parents. The Grammar School has responded to this document by creating and providing a "Readiness to Learn Plan" submitted to and approved by the KDHA.

At Grammar School, we look forward to embracing the 'new normal' that we will experience after re-opening and starting the journey in partnership with our school community. Considerable strategic planning has taken place involving the whole school community over the summer to ensure that this 'new normal' will be safe. It is important that as a community we pull together, remain solution focused and enjoy this wonderful opportunity to create a learning model that is not only special but personalised to meet your child's and family's needs. Our provision will build on the lessons that the school and its staff learned from managing distance learning last term which lead to a positive distance learning evaluation outcome. Our school mission will remain to provide learning opportunities for your child 'to be the best that they can be' in a High Performance Learning environment.

What will the teaching week look like?

At Grammar School we recognise the value of a blended learning model, as a means to facilitating an increase in knowledge and to support the development of student's subject specific skills while in school and not in school. Blended learning models will allow us to use several learning approaches to enhance the effectiveness of teaching as well as meeting those individual needs. Class sizes are likely to be around 15 students based on a seating plan that will keep a social distance of 1.5 meters between students. These smaller class sizes alongside the blended learning approach will enable greater personalisation supporting a variety of learning styles.



In general, our approach will be to use the rotational model where the students will rotate between a fixed schedule of classroom learning and one that is online. Practically this means that 50% of the cohort (group A) will attend school and 50% (Group B) will learn online. This then rotates allowing for all children to attend school over a two-week rotational period unless of course your child is 'shielding'.

Distance learning tasks will take into account the sensitivity and increased challenges for students completing screen time tasks. Teachers will make these tasks as practical as possible and accessible enough so that adults at home can support if required. Of course our teaching staff will also be available to contact online to help support.

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9):

To limit the transition around school these students will remain in a fixed classroom setting with a fixed group of children 'bubble'. The groups of children have been divided based on staff knowledge and recommendations and will remain consistent. Students will remain in their classroom in allocated seats for all lessons during the school day and will be asked not to share any equipment.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11):

Groups will either receive lessons in-school or by distance learning as per our rotational model but the difference now is that in school the children will need to transition between option subjects. To limit this transition and the size of the 'bubble' this will be limited to 4 classrooms. Again, no equipment is to be shared to help support reducing the risk of cross infection. There is an increased responsibility for our key stage 4 students to support the safety of the school community and I am in no doubt they will set a wonderful example.

Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13):

The students of Year 12 are going to be divided into two groups (Group A & B) while following the rotational period of two weeks. The whole cohort of Year 13 will attend school regularly as each subject block has a minimal number of students. They are allocated into 4 designated classrooms. The students who are free in a particular option block will be allotted a specific area in the common room based on a seating plan that will keep a social distance of 1.5 meters between students. Students are advised to bring their own laptops and are not allowed to share to reduce the risk of cross infection. Sixth Form students are responsible for restricting their movement across the corridor and must stay in their designated rooms.

Will the timings of the school day change?

Drop-off and Pick-up times will be slightly staggered for year groups to reduce congestion at the school gate and assist in social distancing. Secondary students will be asked to attend school by 07:20 prompt and move into school in a responsible manner allowing for the younger children to arrive at 07:30. We will inform parents of the exact timings for their child and the drop-off and pick-up arrangements nearer to the start of term.



What will be the technology used by teachers for distance learning?

Parents can already be confident in the school's ability to provide quality e-learning for students working from home. All Grammar School teachers and curriculum leaders are experienced in providing high quality and student accessible on-line learning tasks.

The same platform used by our Secondary students last year will be used this year. Microsoft teams' is a premier virtual learning environment that will allow our distance learning provision at Grammar School to be among the best in Dubai. Additional training is being provided to all our teachers and instruction will be given to students on how to use this platform. Parents will have visibility on what is being posted for their child, their child's responses to the tasks, and the teacher's feedback.

Research conducted worldwide has shown that this blended learning approach (mix of face-to-face learning and e-learning) can support mastery learning, student engagement, and personalisation for a diverse student population. I am confident that with the technology that we plan to use, the training and quality of our teachers, and the experience that we already have of delivering a blended learning programme, our educational provision will be the best available to parents.

How will the school ensure the safety of my child while in school?

All safety procedures in school will adhere to KHDA regulations and recommendations. These are primarily based on strategies to ensure social distancing and prevent groups of students from mixing to reduce potential cross-infection if it were to occur.

- Classrooms will be set up to accommodate reduced capacity. Student desks will be set at a safe distance apart (1.5 meters);
- Teachers will be positioned at the front of the classroom area, at a distance of 1.5 meters.
- All staff members will wear suitable personal protective equipment throughout the duration of the school.
- Learning groups will be stable with no mixing of groups. No swapping of chairs and tables will be allowed.
- Students and teachers must bring their own exclusive stationery items, devices or gadgets (i.e. laptops, tablets, headphones, etc.). Student must not share their stationery.
- Safety markings will be set up throughout corridors, the markings will dictate safe distances of 2 meters. Students will be monitored to ensure strict adherence.
- Staggered break times will be arranged.
- Students will be encouraged to bring healthy food from home while alerting them not to share it with others.
- Packed lunch will be provided in school canteen.
- Water dispensers / coolers have been put out of service. However, water can be bought from mobile canteen @ AED 1.
- Students of Grade 1 and above are required to bring a minimum of two (2) masks each to school per day, for their personal use.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be set up throughout the school, students will be encouraged to wash their hands and sanitize at regular intervals through the day.
- Face shields are encouraged during meal breaks when masks need to be temporarily removed.
- Students will be required to replace their masks following the lunch break.
- Students with medical conditions are exempted from wearing a mask with a medical certificate only, and they should wear face shields instead.



- Frequent touch points, including door handles, light switches, handrails, taps, sinks, toilets etc. will be regularly cleaned and sanitized.
- A thorough cleaning and sanitization of the school will be conducted at the end of each week.
- No activities will be held in shared spaces. Assemblies, events remain online.
- Aspects of distance learning to continue in the form of submission of online assignments and notes.
- School will adhere to paperless work and instead encourage online tools for the same.
- Parents are not permitted to enter the school premises, but they can drop off/pick up their children in designated points and will be given a maximum time limit of 10 minutes in the designated area with no crowding with 1.5 meters distancing, and wearing of masks at all times.
- Upon arrival at school, students will pass through several designated entrance points. The temperature of each student will be measured in these entrance points.
- Students who are found to have a high temperature (starting from 37.5) will be taken aside and moved to the designated segregation zone for a second test. If needed, they will be moved to a pre-approved isolation area to be processed as per the protocol.
- Students who have travelled must adhere to any UAE authority requirements, including any self-isolation and testing requirements 14 days before the start of the academic session. Please refer to the updated travel decisions on quarantine from the relevant authorities.
- Travel declaration forms will be required for all those who travel (in the last 14 days); these must be submitted to the school before joining school.
- Anyone feeling unwell, regardless if there are Covid-19 symptoms or not, must not come to school.
- If a child begins to show one of the following symptoms of COVID-19 (such as fever ($\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$), cough, body ache or fatigue, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, diarrhea and nausea, headache, or loss of sense of smell or taste) while at school, they will be isolated instantly, and the parent will be notified immediately and the patient should be referred to the hospital to take the necessary action.
- The student should not return to school until the PCR result is obtained. If the result is negative and there is a clinical assessment of a probable COVID-19 case, the patient should complete a 14-day quarantine. If the result is negative and there is no clinical assessment for a probable case, the child can resume schooling so long as they are symptom-free.
- Students and staff will be trained and regularly reminded of the general daily health and safety precautions that should be carried out. Covid-19 safety education will form part of the Secondary tutor or PSHE lessons that will take place.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee the arrival of all students. Bus students, Secondary, Primary, and Foundation Stage students will enter the school through their own designated entrances. The rear access to the school will not be used, and all students will pass through the temperature sensor via the front gates.



How will the school ensure the safety of my child on the School Bus?

We have met with our bus providers several times and are confident in the excellent health and safety procedures they are putting in place.

Students will have their temperature taken before boarding the bus. Student will not be allowed to enter the bus if fever is apparent. Parents will have to wait with students until the bus departs.

Students will have an allocated seat on the bus, that will only be used by them. All students will sit beside an empty seat to ensure social distancing, and buses will operate at no more than 50% capacity.

Students will wear masks on the bus and will not be allowed to eat or drink.

Bus drivers and bus attendants will have all received extensive safety training to ensure covid-19 health precautions are understood and adhered to.

The bus will be thoroughly cleaned between each use.

We recommend that parents continue to send their children to school by bus, to save congestion at the front gate in the mornings and better ensure a safe entry and exit from school for your child.

How will other school provisions change?

Sport and PE activities will take place each week for all students with adapted programmes to ensure social distancing and reduce the sharing of equipment. Students will need to wear PE kits to school on the days they have these lessons. More information will follow in due course.

All subject lessons will provide differentiated activities to ensure that those children gifted in certain subjects continue to be extended while those who require additional support continue to receive the help that they need, both in face-to-face teaching and e-learning

Leadership and House activities will be fully operational with adapted plans.

Break times and lunchtimes will continue with staggered timings to reduce the mixing of students. Students will be encouraged to bring their own school lunch and eating utensils to reduce cross-infection possibilities.

What flexibility will parents have in deciding how they wish their child to be taught?

Parents who do not wish their child to attend school, but want them to receive full-time e-learning each week may take this option. Parents may decide to take this as a temporary or long-term option. Parents who do not wish their child to take the school bus may make private arrangements to bring and collect their child from school.



In summary

We hope that parents feel confident in the plans that Grammar School has to ensure high-quality teaching and learning will remain in place after school re-opens and that the school remains a safe and happy learning environment for all our students.

If parents would like to discuss any concerns in person before re-registering their child, then they are welcome to make an appointment to meet myself and the extended leadership team by contacting: headofsecondary@grammarschool.ae

To ensure that we are prepared to welcome your child back to school and have allocated a class and seat for them, we request that parents commit to returning their child to the school as soon as possible by paying the re-registration fee and preferably by Wednesday 19th August. Once parents have re-registered their child, we will send further details to parents enquiring about the options they wish to take for schooling in the first few weeks of term. The staggered drop off/pick up will be shared with you by the Form tutors.

Kind regards,

Viji Koshy

Head of Secondary

