



## **Questions & Answers from Online Event – Thursday 1 July 2021**

### **Induction Day – Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September**

#### ***Is there a reason why ACA is not holding an induction day this month whereas other high schools are still doing theirs?***

Altrincham College will always be guided by the latest advice from Public Health to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its staff and students. As you are already aware, due to Public Health guidance, we were forced to cancel our planned Induction Day scheduled for Thursday 8 July which was a huge disappointment to us.

We are delighted that we will now be able to invite our new Year 7 cohort into school on Monday 6 September for them to experience a full school day with us before other year groups come back on a phased return that week. This will give them a fantastic opportunity to familiarise themselves with the layout of the school, their new form groups and to make new friends.

#### ***Do students need to have packed lunch on the first day?***

For that first day, students should bring £3 cash to spend in the canteen or a packed lunch. This will allow us time on that day to scan the fingerprints of the whole year group.

#### ***Other than the £3 lunch money for the first day, do they need any more money that day?***

Students will not need any more money in school that day. If they are travelling to school using the school bus service, they will obviously require their bus fare.

#### ***Which uniform should students wear on Induction Day?***

Students should arrive in their full Altrincham College uniform on Monday 6 September but will not be required to bring their PE kit that day.

#### ***Are school timetables released in advance of the first day?***

No-students will be given their timetable on the first day. Students will not require their PE kit on the first day.

#### ***Do all years go back on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September?***

In the main part of the school (Years 7-11), Year 7 will be the only cohort on site. Years 12 & 13 will be in the Sixth Form building which is a separate part of the school. Other year groups will be coming back to school on a phased return during that first week.

#### ***Where should students go on the first day?***

There will be a host of staff to welcome your child into school on the first day. They will enter the school via the student walkway which is to the right of the blue main school gates. They will start the day with a year group assembly where they will meet our key staff and their form tutor who will take them to their form room ready to start a suite of exciting induction day activities!

Lots of friendly staff will be on hand to guide them around the school site and they will be given their timetable, a school tour and a map to help them get their bearings very quickly.

### **School Equipment and Art Pack**

#### ***What school equipment should I bring? Do I have to buy an art pack and how much is it?***

We will shortly be sending out to you our Student Guide which contains lots of information about starting at Altrincham College and there is a school equipment list included in this guide.

However, we are pleased to let you know that this year Altrincham College will be providing each student joining us in Year 7 with a new starter pack, free of charge. This pack will include all the basics that they will need for the year including biros, pencils, colour pencils, a calculator, pencil sharpener and an art sketch pad. So, there is no need to buy the art pack which was mentioned in Mrs Wagstaff's video as this will now all be provided for you now. If you wish to go out and buy more personalised stationery then by all means you can do.

### **Extra-Curricular Clubs**

#### ***What after school activities are there?***

Altrincham College offers an array of after-school clubs each week covering a variety of sports, music, art, drama and homework club. Some are run as after school clubs whilst others take place in the lunch break. Clubs are open to all age groups and abilities. On Tuesday and Thursday nights we have a late bus home from school leaving at 4.45pm which runs a more limited service than the morning bus services.

For a flavour of what's on offer at the moment, please visit <https://www.altrinchamcollege.com/enrichment/clubs>. In September, we will let students know what is on offer so they can see what they like the look of and have a go!

#### ***What sports are encouraged by the college?***

During class time, students will cover the full range of sports using our indoor and outdoor on-site sports facilities. Specific after school sports clubs are on offer as well which in the past have included rugby, football, trampolining and cheerleading for example. Also, we are always keen to encourage and celebrate our students' amazing sporting achievements outside of school.

#### ***Are there going to be mixed gender PE sets for Year 7?***

No – students are taught separately in groups of boys or girls. We have specific changing facilities for each group.

#### ***Do you have a school football team?***

Our competitive school teams include football, rugby, netball, basketball, cricket, athletics, tennis and cross country.

#### ***What dance or drama clubs are there and do you do a musical each year?***

We have a thriving Drama department with an extra-curricular club and we are very proud to offer a school musical and/or play each year when we are operating in normal non-Covid circumstances.

## **School Uniform**

### ***What P.E. kit will students need?***

All the information you need regarding our PE kit can be found in the Welcome Guide (copy attached to this email) or on our school website.

### ***Will the tie colour remain the same from Yr7 to Yr13?***

The tie stripe colour for students starting in Year 7 in September 2021 is purple and they will keep this tie colour until Year 11. Students in Years 12 & 13 (6<sup>th</sup> Form) wear business dress instead of the Main School uniform.

## **Lockers**

### ***How do students get a locker and are there enough lockers for all year 7?***

Under current Covid restrictions students are not able to access the lockers as, due to the location of the lockers in school, this would lead to them mixing with students outside their year group bubble. Once Covid restrictions are eased, we will be returning to the use of lockers for all year groups.

With a student population of over 800, unfortunately we currently do not have a locker available for every student. New Year 7 students are not able to pre-book a locker in advance of September. Further information will be given out in September about how and when to apply for a locker which will then be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

## **School Buildings**

### ***Will a map of the school be given out?***

The Student Guide, which will be sent out to you shortly, includes a school map which students will be able to look at over the Summer break. On Monday 6 September all students will receive a map of the school and a comprehensive guided tour of the school site. It won't be long until they are quickly and easily able to navigate their way around and there will always be other friendly students and members of staff to help them out!

### ***Are some classrooms currently unavailable due to their needing repairs and is there any date set for when they will be operational again?***

We are delighted to confirm that school has just secured the necessary funding to repair the part of school which is currently closed. The work is scheduled to commence over the Summer holidays and will last several months. During this academic year, we have converted other spaces within the school site to become teaching areas to accommodate the temporary loss of this space.

### ***Is there a one-way system in place in the corridors?***

In common with many secondary schools and to ensure the efficient flow of students around the school building, there is a one-way system in place in some parts of Altrincham College. This is closely monitored by staff and your child/ward will very quickly become used to these arrangements.

### ***Do Year 7 pupils have access to the Library?***

Unfortunately, the Library is in the part of the building which is currently inaccessible. Specific books, other resources and study spaces will be made available to students on request.

### **Tours and Visits**

#### ***Can we book a tour of the school?***

Unfortunately, due to Covid protocols, we are required to limit the number of external visitors to school. Based on the information we have received from primary schools and the individual needs of some children, we have offered a school tour to a small number of children to aid their transition to secondary school. Due to the volume of requests we are sadly not able to offer tours to all new pupils. Those tours already scheduled to take place will go ahead but unfortunately, we are not in a position to offer anymore tours before school closes for the Summer break. Please rest assured that your child/ward will have a full guided tour of the school on Monday 6 September and there will be as much support as they need to help familiarise themselves with their new surroundings.

#### ***Is it possible to get a recorded video tour of the school, to help the students visualise what it looks like and moving between departments?***

In the next few days we will be sending you a recorded video tour of the school so that students can see what the school looks like inside and start to visualise being inside the buildings themselves.

### **Languages**

#### ***Will students be studying French or Spanish or both and how will this be decided after Year 7?***

All students joining us in Year 7 will study both French and Spanish and will have 2 lessons of each language across our 2-week timetable. Once students reach Year 9, they will be able to choose their GCSE options allowing them to specialise in different curriculum areas.

### **Mobile Phones in School**

#### ***What are the rules around mobiles in school? Are students allowed to keep mobile phones off in their bags/ pockets so we contact them when they're on the way home?***

From September, Altrincham College will be moving to a new mobile phone policy which will mean that students will not be allowed to use mobile phones around school at any time. We do however understand that parents and students will want to have the ability to contact each other outside of school hours. From September, students' mobile phones will need to be switched off and remain in their school bag whilst they are on the school site. Any mobile phones seen in use around the school will be confiscated.

### **Form Groups**

#### ***Do students stay in their forms for the rest of their time at high school?***

Yes, once students are allocated to their form group they will stay with that form from Year 7 to Year 11 giving them time to build up a strong relationship with their form tutor and peers. From

time to time if staff feel that a form move would be beneficial to a student, a move will be made to another form group.

***Will children be placed with their friends in a form?***

We will always endeavour to keep friendship groups together but we must always balance this with the number of children coming from a particular school and any specific information we have received from our primary school colleagues.

***What do the forms signify?***

From September, there will be a short form time at the start of the day and another during lunch time. Students may spend this time doing PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) activities as directed by the Form Tutor, being registered and working collaboratively their peers.

***When do the children find out who their form tutor is?***

We understand how important the relationship is between a student and their Form Tutor and the vital pastoral role that the Form Tutor will play as our new students settle in. This week we will be sending you a profile of each our Year 7 Form Tutors so that your child/ward can have a look at their photo and find out a bit more about them before they start in September. Two other really important members of staff are Mrs Wagstaff, Head of Year 7 and Mrs Waring, Pastoral Support Manager for the year group. This team of people will always be on hand to help your child.

***Will Altrincham College be sending out the form groups which were displayed at the Live Q & A event?***

Yes – we will send those slides displaying form groups out to parents/carers week commencing 5 July 2021.

***Do the children stay together in lessons with their form or do they go to separate classes with other children?***

In Year 7, students are taught in their form groups apart from PE and Food/Textiles lessons. As they move through the school, groupings are changed based on students' educational needs and in Years 10 & 11, based on the options they choose for their GCSE subjects.

***How were the classes decided? Is it possible for children to change forms?***

Our transition team have already pulled together a wealth of information on our new Year 7 cohort by gathering information from each of our feeder primary schools and speaking to primary teachers about each child. We have taken advice from primary teachers and have worked hard to accommodate their suggestions for form groupings. As we are sure you will appreciate, deciding on the form groups is a difficult task but please rest assured that we have used all of that information to put together the form structure.

***I've noticed some schools have been put together so there are almost half the class are made up of one school but other students have been split up, is there any reason for that?***

We have a large number of students coming from some of our feeder primary schools so there appears to be bigger groups of students in certain forms. Once again, as far as possible we have used the information from primary schools to formulate these groupings.

**School Meals & Fingerprinting**

***When do students have their fingerprint taken in order to pay for school meals?***

Altrincham College is a cashless school and students use their fingerprints to access their Parent Pay account to pay for purchases in the canteen. We will capture the biometric data (fingerprint) of all students whose parents/carers have given consent for the use of biometric data on the first day, Monday 6 September 2021. For that first day, students should bring £3 cash to spend in the canteen or a packed lunch whilst their fingerprints are being recorded.

Our Finance department will send you a letter which will give you the codes required to set up your Parent Pay account at Altrincham College.

**Transition Information**

***Have we already had the Pupil Guide?***

The Student Guide will be sent to you shortly. It is written by students for students and contains lots of information about Altrincham College including a map, school rules and information on extra-curricular activities.

***What do the welcome packs have in them? We haven't received one.***

We have already sent you a Parent Welcome Guide via email and another copy of that document is attached to this email for your convenience.

On their first day at Altrincham College (Monday 6 September), students will be given free of charge, a starter pack which will include all the basics that they will need for the year including biros, pencils, colour pencils, a calculator, pencil sharpener and an art sketch pad.

**School Meals**

***Can students bring a packed lunch to school?***

Yes – students are free to choose whether they purchase food from the school canteen or bring a packed lunch to school.

***How do they pay for meals first day?***

As we won't be taking students' fingerprints until Monday 6 September we ask that students bring in £3 in cash to buy lunch on the first day or alternatively that they bring a packed lunch from home.

***How do we provide them with money for lunches?***

As we are a cashless school, we use fingerprint data in the canteen for children to pay for meals. Parents can use a Parent Pay account to add money remotely to a child's school meal account or alternatively we have cash loader machines in school where students can load up cash onto their school meal account.

***How do you link the school to Parent Pay?***

Our Finance department will send you a letter which will give you the codes required to set up your Parent Pay account at Altrincham College.

***Will students who are eligible for Free School Meals have a lunch provided on the first day?***

Yes – those students in receipt of Free School Meals will have their lunch provided.

***What sort of budget should they have for lunch? Is there a price guide to enable us to budget? What's on offer in the canteen?***

You can find sample menus of the food on offer by visiting our school website:

<https://www.altrinchamcollege.com/information/school-meals> . The canteen offers a wide variety of hot and cold food both at break time and lunch. Free toast and water are available to all students at morning break. Students can purchase a balanced healthy lunch and drink for around £2.50 per day. We have added a sample price list to the transition information page of our website to give you a guide to the cost of food in the canteen:

<https://www.altrinchamcollege.com/admissions/transition-to-year-7-september-2021>.

***Where do students eat their lunch? Do they have to eat outside? Is there a covered area?***

Currently with Covid restrictions in place and to avoid the mixing of year group bubbles, all students eat outside in the fresh air within their year group bubble. Our catering staff have carefully designed the menu around food which can be eaten under these circumstances. Children bringing a packed lunch and those buying a school meal eat in the same area and at the same time. We have our very own outdoor catering van, "The Pod" which is situated under a large area covered with a canopy. If the weather is very inclement, students will eat lunch in their form rooms. Once Covid restrictions are eased, we anticipate that students will be able to return to eating inside in the canteen area.

**Online Learning**

***Please could you tell us about your online learning system should the children need it in September?***

Should online learning be required again in the case of a school lockdown, Altrincham College would use Microsoft Teams.

Your student will be given a Class Charts account which teachers use to set and monitor homework each week.

**School Day**

***How many lessons are there in one day?***

In September we are planning for the following schedule for the day assuming Covid restrictions are eased. School will commence at 8.45am prompt with a 10-minute registration period in form groups followed by 2, 1-hour periods of lesson time. Period 3 (1 hour) will incorporate lesson time and a 20-minute break. Period 4 will last 1 hour and will be followed by a 30-minute lunch time and form time. Period 5 (1 hour) comes straight after lunch and the school day concludes at 3.15pm each day.

***Are students allowed outside on rainy days?***

In very inclement weather we would have a "wet break" meaning that students would be expected to stay in the classrooms. When this is the case, students still have full access to the toilets and refreshments.

***Is 30 minutes long enough for a lunch break and will it be reviewed in the future?***

Yes – the structure of the school day is an interim measure whilst the building work is completed on the school site. The length of lunchtime will be reviewed in the future and a decision will be

made by the school's leadership team as to whether to expand the duration of lunchtime or keep it at 30 minutes.

***If they catch the bus, what is the earliest time they are allowed in the building?***

Under current Covid restrictions, students are not allowed onto the school site until 8.30am and go straight to their Period 1 classroom. We are hoping that once Covid restrictions end we will be able to welcome students on to site earlier so that they can go to the canteen and we will confirm this as soon as we have further guidance on the easing of restrictions.

***Is there a staggered start and finish time?***

We do not currently operate a staggered start and finish time as many of our students use the school buses to travel to and from school.

**Transport to School and School Buses**

***How do they know which bus to catch on their first day and where it leaves from?***

The school bus services that serve Altrincham College are run by external bus companies which are organised by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). All information relating to the school bus services including routes and stops can be found on our school website:

<https://www.altrinchamcollege.com/buses>. It would be worthwhile planning ahead over the Summer to see which bus stop is nearest to your house and practising the journey from home to the stop.

***Does the school bus always arrive on time?***

On the vast majority of days, the buses arrive at school on time but inevitably sometimes the traffic en route is heavier and the bus can be late. Those students arriving late due to issues with the school bus services will not be penalised with a late mark.

***It says the school bus leaves at 3:20pm. Is 5 mins enough to get from the class to the bus?***

Members of staff are on hand at the beginning and end of the school day to see students safely on and off the school buses. The buses park in the laybys at the front of school right alongside the main student entrance walkway.

***Where should pupils be dropped off or collected from?***

Altrincham College is situated on Green Lane which is a busy road at both drop off and pick up times. We would encourage students living locally to walk to school or be dropped off a short way away and to walk the remainder of the journey to cut down on congestion in the area. We ask parents to respect our neighbouring families and would remind them that Dobbies car park across the road is for Dobbies' customers only.

***If students have to catch a public bus what is the earliest time they are allowed into the building?***

Under current Covid restrictions, students are not allowed onto the school site until 8.30am and go straight to their Period 1 classroom. We are hoping that once Covid restrictions end we will be able to welcome students on to site earlier so that they can go to the canteen and we will confirm this as soon as we have further guidance on the easing of restrictions.

***At what time does breakfast club open in the morning?***

Unlike primary schools, we do not have a breakfast club as such. Once Covid restrictions are lifted, we hope to be in a position to let students start to arrive on site earlier than 8.30am to use the school canteen.

***Do you have cycle parking?***

We are currently working to relocate our bike shed as the result of the building work. There will be limited spaces for bicycles on the school site. The exact location will be confirmed shortly.

***Can students come to school on an electric scooter?***

Electric scooters cannot currently be used legally on public roads, cycle lanes or pavements in the UK so students will not be permitted to use them as a way to get to school.

**Pastoral Issues and Support**

***Can students use the toilet in between classes?***

At Altrincham College we fully appreciate that there is a steep learning curve for students when they start secondary school. When they first join us, they will be allowed to use the toilets in between classes and then after they have settled in, they will be encouraged to use the facilities at break and lunchtime.

***What is the capacity of the classes?***

Most classes have a capacity of 30 students. Some classes have slightly fewer students to allow for any academic support staff that may be required.

***What extra support do you have for the kids who may struggle?***

At Altrincham College we pride ourselves on getting to know your child as an individual very quickly allowing us to offer them the support they require to flourish. In addition to the information parents/carers have given us as part of the online enrolment form, our Special Educational Needs department already has comprehensive data from primary schools about those children who currently access extra support. Plans will be put in place to tailor that support to your child/ward's new secondary school setting.

Year 7 will have a dedicated pastoral support team comprised of Mrs Wagstaff (Head of Year), Mrs Waring (Pastoral Support Manager) and your child's Form Tutor. It will be their job to support your child in school to ensure that they are settling in well and making progress. These three members of staff will be the main contacts for students and parents/carers for all pastoral matters.

**Homework**

***Do you recommend students getting a laptop for homework and if so, do you recommend a particular type?***

Homework is set for students using the Class Charts online app which students can access using a computer, tablet or smartphone. We would not recommend a certain type of device but having online access will be useful for students to access the homework app.

***What about homework? Do they get a set period of time to complete it?***

Home learning will be set regularly by teachers in each subject area. Students will be told in September how and when this will be set and the expectations regarding this aspect of school

life. We believe that home learning is an important part of students developing their independent study skills.

### **Covid Protocols**

For the past year, Altrincham College, like all schools nationally, has been operating under stringent Covid protocols meaning that the school has been organised very differently to normal circumstances. As restrictions are eased, we sincerely hope to be able to return to a more "normal" way of operating. We will be guided by the very latest advice from Public Health and the Department of Education and therefore some final decisions about the start of the new school year remain undecided until we receive final government guidance. We will keep parents/carers fully updated as the information becomes available to us.

#### ***Do you anticipate students moving classrooms in September unlike this year when they have had to stay in classrooms?***

Altrincham College will always be guided by the latest advice from Public Health to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its staff and students. We are very much hoping and planning for a return to normal school operations with a normal timetable but this will depend on the guidance we receive from Public Health and the Department for Education and we therefore cannot guarantee that this will be the case. Under normal circumstances, students move around the whole school site to be taught in subject specific teaching spaces rather than being based in a year group zone within school.

#### ***Do students have to wear masks in the classrooms or just corridors?***

With the recent rise in cases in the North West, students are currently required to wear a mask on the school buses, on entry and exit from the school, around the corridors and at lunch and break times when they are not eating. We await Government guidance as to the rules regarding mask wearing for our return to school in September.

### **Trips & Visits**

#### ***COVID restrictions permitting, is there a chance of a Year 7 residential next year?***

Altrincham College believes very strongly in the value of extra-curricular and curriculum enrichment activities including trips and visits. In the past we have run Year 7 residential trips to Scarborough and Lake Bala and other trips to Geneva, ski trips, day trips to Blackpool and other more local venues.

Due to Covid restrictions we have not been able to run these trips but once restrictions are eased and relevant guidance says that we can do so, we look forward to being able to offer these important experiences once again.