



Plans for Full Reopening of School March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are very much looking forward to being able to welcome all our young people back to full-time education at George Stephenson High School next week. They have been missed by our staff who are keen to see them all again. We have been working on our plans for their safe return; this letter is intended to share what you need to know in more detail. We have been grateful for your support over the last two months and know that you will continue to support the school in the same way. Please read the information in this letter carefully, to ensure you understand what is expected when students return to school.

There are two major changes that you will be aware about – the mass testing of our students which begins on Monday and the recommendation from the government that students will need to wear face coverings in classrooms as well as corridors and communal areas (until Easter at least).

As we did in September we will aim to provide as much as possible 'education as usual', with all of our existing additional precautions to make this as safe as possible. We will endeavour to find a workable compromise which enables 'education as usual' to go ahead as much as it can, while also minimising contact between pupils as much as possible. Our approach means that students can continue to access a broad and balanced curriculum whilst avoiding any significant contact with other year groups which makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible.

In order to minimise 'close contact' different year groups will continue to have slightly staggered starts and ends to the school day, and will have all breaks and lunches at different times and in different areas of the school. This will allow us to deliver the best possible curriculum, avoid students being left in classrooms unsupervised, and will minimise contact with other year groups to transitional situations.

Students will still move around the school for their lessons in order to allow us to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and provide specialist teaching and although the government states that '*passing briefly in the corridor is low risk*' we are also introducing a one way, open door, system to further minimise the risk and avoid busy corridors, entrances and exits.

There are certain changes/key points you need to be aware of:

- The wearing of face coverings is now compulsory (unless you have a medical exemption), at all times in school where a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained. This will apply not only in corridors and social areas but also in classrooms. Please see below.
- Students will be tested for Covid 19 on three separate occasions if they have consented. Please see letter sent on 2nd March for further information.
- Good hygiene and hand sanitising must be maintained.
- Students need to try and keep to the social distance rules.

- Full school uniform must be worn
- We will continue to have staggered start and finish times for each year group. Year 7 and 8 will be let in to the building at 8.30am and Year 9 to 11 at 8.35am. Year 12 and 13 should arrive at 8.40am.
- Staggered break and lunch times will continue in order to reduce pressure on social spaces and keep year group bubbles apart.
- There will be a one-way system on corridors and stairwells will be one way too
- Visual reminders around the school site
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Hand sanitisers in every classroom
- Regular hand washing regimes and outdoor wash basins at different points around the school
- Robust procedures should a child or member of staff display symptoms of coronavirus
- Students will face forward or side by side with the teacher at the front of the class
- Windows will be open for increased ventilation
- No assemblies or large gatherings
- Outdoor sports where possible
- More regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces - touchpoints will be cleaned throughout the day and toilets.
- We will ensure that, wherever possible, students use the outdoor routes around the building to minimise passing other students in corridors.
- We will be advising staff and students to maintain social distance at all times in the classroom and all we will seat pupils side by side and facing forwards and we will keep seating plans in place to minimise students mixing within different classrooms and to make it easier to engage with NHS Test and Trace process.

Face coverings

The Government have now recommended that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained: ***‘for a limited period, we recommend the use of face coverings in classrooms and other teaching spaces where social distancing cannot be easily maintained...we are taking this additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point’.***

We will therefore be following this guidance in classrooms from 8th March and will expect students to wear face masks in classrooms as well as around school, until Easter, and we ask for your support with this. Where social distancing isn't possible for teachers in classrooms, teachers will also wear masks. We will review this in line with government advice at this point.

Wearing a face covering does not apply in situations where it would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons. Students do not need to wear face masks outside or while they are eating at breaks and lunchtimes. We realise that wearing masks in classrooms may cause some communication issues and we will need to work through this together. If you have any concerns about this, or your child is exempt from wearing a face covering, please contact your child's Guidance Manager as soon as possible.

Return to School Dates

Year 10, 11, 12 and 13 students	Monday 8th March - will attend school for their test only and will then return home
Year 10, 11 and 13 students	Return to school for face to face teaching on Tuesday 9th March - normal school day beginning at 8.40am
Year 12 students	Return to school for face to face teaching on Wednesday 10th March (they will still be undertaking their enrichment day on the Tuesday at home) - normal school day beginning at 8.40am
Year 7, 8 and 9 students	Tuesday 9th March - will attend school for their test only and will then return home
Year 7, 8 and 9 students	Return to school for face to face teaching on Wednesday 10th March - normal school day beginning at 8.40am

Remote Learning next week

Year 10-13

On Monday 8th March students will be coming into school for their Covid tests. Lessons will run as normal on that day, but staff are aware that students have these tests and will therefore be missing for 1-2 lessons at different times. Most of the learning set that day will focus on catching up or consolidating learning to help prepare students for their return to school on the Tuesday.

Year 7-9

On Monday 8th March, lessons will run as normal according to student timetables. On Tuesday 9th March students will be coming into school for their Covid tests. Lessons will run as normal on that day, but staff are aware that students have these tests and will therefore be missing for 1-2 lessons at different times. Most of the learning set that day will focus on catching up or consolidating learning to help prepare students for their return to school on the Wednesday.

Uniform and PE Kit

Students will need to wear full uniform on their first full day back which will be Tuesday for Years 10 and 11 and Wednesday for Years 7-9. Students will still be required to attend school in their full and correct PE kit on the days that they are timetabled to have PE. This is because, in line with government and Association for Physical Education guidance, we are still not currently able to use the changing rooms (see the letter from the PE department).

We do recognise that the financial cost of this last year will cause difficulties for some parents in providing uniform. The Local Authority have let us know that they are bringing in a scheme to help provide some funding for school clothing for all children who are currently in receipt of income related free school meals. We don't have any details around this yet but understand that they will look to provide a voucher for £20 for the school's uniform supplier (Emblematic) and a further voucher for supermarkets worth £25. We will provide more

details around this when we get them but in summary each child on income related free school meals will receive one school uniform supplier voucher and one supermarket voucher.

Catering

There will be a full catering service for students from Monday 8th March. Please remember to top up their cashless card for lunchtime. The **water fountains will be available** for students to fill their bottles throughout the school day. However, we cannot supply plastic cups and they cannot use the “mouth spout” as this function is disabled so they will need to bring in their own bottle.

Transport

Nexus are running the scholars' buses and they are operating to the current timetable on our website. Information from Nexus is here (please see attached letter)

- Families should plan how their children will reach schools and colleges comfortably – walking and cycling where journeys are shorter, using a car for part of the journey but dropping off away from school gates, and identifying which public transport they can use if they need to.
- There will be extra buses on many services going to or near schools, following established routes. These will include buses on busy routes so pupils can travel separately to other passengers.
- Pupils using public transport should use a contactless card or have exact change to make their journey - some operators also have mobile phone ticket apps that allow gifting from parents to a child's account; check operator websites for details.
- Anyone using public transport should follow standard public health advice – washing hands thoroughly throughout the day, wearing a face covering if aged over 11 and not exempt, and not travelling if they have symptoms of Covid-19. Ensure you maintaining social distancing, where possible, including at busy entrances, exits, under canopies, bus stops, platforms or outside of stations.
- Pupils should wear face coverings when using any public transport, including all buses dedicated to transport to and from schools, except where there is an exemption on health grounds.

You can find general advice to families at www.nexus.org.uk/covid-secure.

Can we finally ask you two things around dropping off and picking up students – the local authority have done some work in the bus turning circle so there is **no parking, stopping or dropping off allowed** in there at all and there is also no parking, stopping or dropping off allowed immediately outside the school gates. Also please do not come into the visitors car park to drop off students in the morning when all of the other students are coming into school. If you do drop off your children, it will need to be further away from the school than it has been in the past.

As I said, we are very much looking forward to being able to welcome all our young people back next week.

Yours sincerely

Mr Wilkinson