



# George Stephenson High School

## **Covid-19 Risk Assessment Summary Statement**

### **For September 2020**

In light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Department for Education published guidance on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 to assist schools in their planning to safely re-open to all year groups from September 2020. This guidance instructs schools to conduct a Covid-19 risk assessment which has resulted in the implementation of control measures that will ensure we provide an environment that is as safe as is reasonably practicable and in line with current government guidance.

George Stephenson High School are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of our pupils, colleagues, visitors and contractors. Throughout the pandemic we have worked closely with our Local Authority partners to risk assess our premises and activities in order to develop and embed control measures and systems of work that minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (Covid-19).

Our risk assessment was originally developed in May 2020 to enable the re-opening of our school to limited years groups and key-worker pupils from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Since that time our risk assessment has been subject to continual review and update as further government guidance became available.

This document sets out a summary of the results of our COVID-19 risk assessment and demonstrates our commitment to provide a safe environment for the education of our pupils and a workplace for our colleagues who are working in, and will be returning to, their normal work setting. It highlights examples of the measures we have adopted to ensure pupils, staff, visitors and contractors attending George Stephenson High School can do so safely.

Our risk assessment follows the Health and Safety Executive's Five Steps to Risk Assessment which includes:

- Identifying the hazards
- Deciding who can be harmed and how
- Evaluating the risks and deciding on precautions
- Recording the findings and implementing them
- Reviewing the risk assessment and updating it where required (i.e. where guidance has changed)

We have developed our risk assessment in consultation with key stakeholders within the school, including our Governing Body, our staff and our trade union representatives. The risk assessment is a 'live' document which continues to be reviewed on a regular basis following changes in guidance and taking on board feedback from staff, pupils, parents and visitors.

We appreciate that some of our parents and carers may have concerns about their children returning to school, but we would like to reassure you that the school have acted on professional advice; we have consulted with relevant bodies; and we have taken all reasonable steps to ensure the environment is as safe as possible.

## **Summary of Results**

From September we will aim to reintroduce as much as possible 'education as usual', with additional precautions to make this as safe as possible. We will 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.

For this reason the leadership team and governing body have formally considered the government guidance whilst taking into account the impact of lost learning on our young people. We want to provide, as the government states, a 'full educational experience...and start to reverse the enormous costs of missed education'. We acknowledge that it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment but we will be introducing a wide range of 'proportionate protective measures for children and staff'

We have given formal consideration of how to minimise contact and maximise distancing wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable, while taking into account our own situation and the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum.

We aim to minimise the potential for contamination so far as reasonably practical for our school and as such, from September, students in different year groups will operate in temporal 'bubbles'. This 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 have slightly staggered starts and ends to the school day, and will have 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.

## Control measures include, but are not limited to:

- Engagement with the NHS Test and Trace Program
- Implementation of an effective infection control program which includes:
  - Regular handwashing
  - Cleaning/sanitising stations at key areas within the school
  - An increased cleaning regime for regular touch points and resources used during teaching activities
  - Immediate response to individuals showing COVID-19 related symptoms
- Social distancing for staff and pupils who can follow social distancing requirements
- Adaptions to classrooms including removal of furniture and changing of desks to prevent face to face or side on contact
- Signage to remind all staff, pupils and visitors of key COVID-19 control measures that are operating on site
- Review of our emergency response procedures including evacuation and local outbreak
- Increased support from a wellbeing perspective for staff and pupils
- Revised visitor access arrangements to minimise the routes of access to the school site
- Review of ventilation within the school to ensure there is a constant flow of outside air circulating
- Sharing of measures with key stakeholders including site neighbours and contractors (including dedicated school transport) to ensure consistent adherence to the school's risk control measures
- Staggered break and lunch times in order to reduce pressure on social spaces and keep year group bubbles apart.
- Separate social areas, so that where students from different year group bubbles are on break or lunch at the same time, they are kept separate from one another.
- Some limited staggering of start and finish times to reduce pressure on entrances and exits.
- There will be a one-way system on corridors and stairwells will be one way too – either up or down only.
- 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
- A briefing for all staff and students at the beginning of the year and regular reminders
- 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 introduce seating plans in place to minimise students mixing within different classrooms and to make it easier to engage with NHS Test and Trace process.
- Students and staff are to wear face coverings **when moving around indoors** particularly in corridors and other indoor communal areas such as entrance hallways and exits and

other areas of the schools where there may be a gathering or mixing of cohorts of pupils and where social distancing is more difficult.

- Students and staff are therefore required to wear face coverings in corridors as they go to registration, move between lessons, as they move to and from break and lunch and as they leave the school at the end of the day.

We feel that the control measures implemented are sensible and proportionate to reduce the risk to the lowest practicable level however they will be regularly reviewed at the end of every half-term and if we experience a coronavirus case.

We believe that the measures we have put in place strike an appropriate balance between providing the best possible educational experience for our students whilst minimising any potential spread of the virus.

We will advise 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. We will give frequent reminders of robust hand and respiratory hygiene. There will be hand sanitisers in every classroom, indeed all classrooms have a hygiene tray with staff can use themselves including a sanitiser spray bottle for teachers to use and spray as the students enter the classroom. Internal corridors have sanitisers too. We will introduce seating plans in place to minimise students mixing within different classrooms and to make it easier to engage with NHS Test and Trace process. Windows will be open for increased ventilation.

George Stephenson High School continue to work closely with the Local Authority and it's partners to ensure we act on all advice and guidance as it becomes available in order to provide the safest possible environment for everyone within our school. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we move forward through this challenging period.