



28 August 2020

### Plans for Full Reopening of School – September 2020

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 this September. 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 and have refined these over the last few weeks; this letter is intended to share what you need to know in more detail. We have been grateful for your support over the last six 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. Please be reassured that all students, during their induction session, will receive further information, guidance and support in how these plans will work in practice.**

All schools and other education settings will open fully this September. As you know the government has repeatedly stated that “It is our plan that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term”. They say that “returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children’s future ability to learn, and therefore we need to ensure all pupils can return to school sooner rather than later” and that “the Chief Medical Officers from all four nations in the United Kingdom have made it clear that the overall risks to children from coronavirus (COVID-19) in relation to education settings is low and that the risks associated with not being in school certainly outweigh those of being in school.”

We agree that ***‘returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing’***. 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’***

**From September then we will aim to reintroduce as much as possible ‘education as usual’, with 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.

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.

Based on the advice of the health protection team schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person if they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time within one metre, including being coughed on, face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

**In order to minimise 'close contact' different year groups will 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.**

**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
- 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 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 very much look forward to your child starting back at school in September and hope you agree that the measures we have put in place strike an appropriate balance between providing the best possible educational experience for your child whilst minimising any potential spread of the virus.

### First week of term

As I explained at the end of last term the first three days of term in September will look different to previous years.

<b>Monday 31 August</b>	Bank Holiday – school is closed.
<b>Tuesday 1 September</b>	Training Day for staff only
<b>Wednesday 2 September</b>	Year 7 only – 8.30am to 3.00pm
<b>Thursday 3 September</b>	Year 7 only – 8.30am to 3.00pm
<b>Friday 4 September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 7 will attend the whole day</li> <li>• Year 8 will attend from 9am to 12pm</li> <li>• Year 9 will attend from 9.15am to 12.15pm</li> <li>• Year 10 will attend from 9.30am to 12.30pm</li> <li>• Year 11 will attend from 9.45am to 12.45pm</li> <li>• Year 12 will attend at 1pm (there will also be familiarisation visits to Longbenton at 9am)</li> <li>• Year 13 will attend at 8.45am</li> </ul>

On Friday 4 September, please go straight to your form room upon arrival – the vast majority of form rooms are the same as last year with the exceptions below:

Year 8 - Ms Barclay's form in C25; Mrs Little's form in C26; Miss Wheatley's form in F5

Year 9 - Miss Fearnley's form in C10

Year 11 - Mrs Smith's form in C20; Miss Stephenson's form will now be with Mrs Bell in C32

While I know you will be very keen for all children to be back as soon as possible I hope you understand our rationale behind this. Many other schools do this every year anyway but I am sure you understand that the students who are joining our school this coming year have had no transition activities whatsoever and many of them will not have even been to our school yet. It will be daunting for all young people coming back to school as it is, but it will be especially daunting for the new Year 7 students. Other local high schools are doing something similar. Throughout the three days that week, Year 7 will be involved in a range of activities which will allow them to spend time with their tutor and their form class, meet key staff, find their way around the building and learn more about routines and expectations in their new school.

For Year 8 to Year 13, all students will need a full induction and there will be a lot of changes we will need to take them through. To enable this to be successful, we are asking students to attend for a half-day on that Friday to spend time with their form tutor. There will be a brief break during the session but there will be no lunch. Thank you for your understanding and patience around this.

**The full timetable will then begin on Monday 7th September.**

### **What will school look like in September?**

We envisage that school will look as normal as possible in September with the school day running from 8:40am until 3:00pm. Slightly staggered start and end times, and staggered and separate break and lunch times will be in place in order to reduce pressure on social spaces and keep year groups apart. This will be explained fully to the students in September but the access times to the building will be slightly staggered between 8.30 and 8.40 and end times will be between 2.50 and 3.00. Each year group will still have a 15 minute break at some point between 9.45 and 11.00 and each year group will have a 30 minute lunch at some point between 11.50 and 1.20pm. Hygiene regimes will be in place to keep everyone as safe as possible. This will include hand washing and/or hand sanitising upon entering the building and at the beginning and end of each lesson and break / lunch time. Frequent hand washing where possible will also be encouraged and the necessity for good respiratory hygiene will be emphasised. Classrooms will remain well ventilated and pupils will be encouraged to move between lessons using the outside space wherever possible

### **What will our classrooms look like?**

They will look very similar apart from the fact that all the tables and chairs are in rows and are facing the front. In the occasional classroom where this is not possible (for example a couple of Science classrooms) other measures will be put in place.

### **Will the school be following a full timetable of curriculum subjects?**

Yes, we fully intend to offer all our children the usual breadth of subjects available at George Stephenson High School. Teachers will gauge where the children are in their learning and tailor their lessons accordingly for any learning that has been missed.

### **Will the children be required to wear school uniform?**

Yes (including for the session with their form tutors on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September). Please refer to our uniform list for what your children will need to be ready for school.

The government guidance encourages all schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term. They say that uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone and that uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

### **Attendance**

Attendance for all students is mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term, including for students who have, so far, been advised to shield at home. Students who are self-isolating if presenting with Covid-19 symptoms, or have been exposed to somebody presenting with symptoms of Covid-19, **MUST NOT** attend school until the self-isolation period has passed or they test negative.

### **Face Coverings**

Following advice from the WHO on 21 August, further Government guidance on 26 August and this information below from Wendy Burke, the Director of Public Health in North Tyneside received on 28 August we have decided to ask students and staff to wear a face covering when moving between lessons and in communal areas:

**“Based on the evidence to date, the known challenges in maintaining social distancing with young people and the potential increased confidence of parents and staff for full re-opening of schools, my recommendation as the Director of Public Health is that face coverings should be required in communal areas of schools across secondary schools for both pupils and staff as a means to preventing the transmission of Coronavirus in secondary schools”.**

There is support for a consistent approach across the borough and our understanding is that all secondary schools in North Tyneside are accepting this recommendation from our Director of Public Health.

Therefore, having carefully considered this latest guidance and advice we have taken the following decisions:

- 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.

- Once students have arrived at their lesson or break/lunch area, face coverings can be removed.
- Students should put their face coverings on by the time they enter the school building.
- Those students and staff who are medically exempt from wearing face coverings are not required to wear them.
- As a general approach, face coverings are **NOT necessary** in the classroom or other locations where pupils are being taught in a cohort such as a sports hall, dining rooms where pupils are eating and drinking and outdoors (the ventilation factor reduces the risk and it is much easier to social distance).
- Students and staff therefore do not need to wear face coverings in lessons as the control measures in our risk assessment reduce the risk of transmission.
- Students and staff therefore do not need to wear face coverings at break or lunch when in the dining hall or in the canopy or yard.

Please see the separate information sheet on face coverings for more detail.

### **If your child becomes unwell during the school day**

If your child becomes unwell at school and develops a new, continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of smell or taste, parents will be contacted for arrangements to be made for the immediate collection of your child. They will be self-isolated within the school and will be supervised, as necessary, until they can be collected. The school will contact you via telephone as soon as possible, to make arrangements for your child to go home. Please make sure we have all relevant contact details.

### **What about PE?**

We want to make sure that children can have access to their PE lessons every week. We will confirm in September exactly how PE will work. Hand sanitisation will take place at the beginning and end of each lesson. Currently Government guidance is advising against any contact sport being taught and we will be following the guidance and await further updates.

### **How will the children get to school in September?**

Schools have been asked to encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if at all possible. Nexus have also asked us to actively promote walking and cycling as the best choice for pupils and provide where possible facilities to support this. We have new larger and secure bicycle storage facilities.

Nexus will be running the scholars' buses, as in previous years. Details and timetables are on our website. They have asked us to remind parents that the wearing of face covering on public transport is mandatory for children aged 11 and over, except where an individual has exemptions for medical reasons. Students without face coverings may be refused travel. Additionally, students should carry their own hand sanitizer as these will not be available on public transport, including scholars' buses. Buses will run to standard seating capacity ONLY – standing will not be permitted.

### **Can we meet our children at the end of the day?**

Government guidance clearly stipulates that parents and carers should not gather around the school gate at the beginning or end of the day and we request that this guidance is followed.

## How can parents communicate with school?

Unfortunately, parents and carers are not allowed on site unless they have made a prior appointment. The school planner has traditionally been an important line of communication with school. Parents are also welcome to contact the school by phone and email.

## Catering

In preparation for re-opening, we have been working on finalising the arrangements for our new catering provision with **Hutchison Catering**. We have a newly fitted kitchen and a new cashless provision. At break and lunch time the school kitchen will be open as usual. Students can bring a packed lunch if they prefer. All water fountain facilities will be out of action to limit infection control, so students should bring their own water bottle. Infection control and social distancing measures will be enforced during lunchtime. Students will be directed not to share food, or cups at this time. Break and lunches are staggered so that we can ensure enough space for students and staff. Each year group will have a separate break and lunch time and area so they will not come into contact with students from any other year group.

We know that you may have some concerns over the time your child has missed at school and want to reassure you that, from September, teachers will take the time to understand what your child has learned and what they might need more support with. Much of this support can be given in class but, where a student needs additional help, other intervention will also be available. We hope that the school will not need to close again, but should that be necessary, we have plans in place to transition back to a remote learning model similar to that which has operated this half term with teachers setting weekly work by email, making regular contact with students and providing feedback. Your child's learning is of paramount importance to us and we will endeavour to do everything we can to support them over the next year.

Attached to this letter are the following:

- Risk Assessment Summary Statement for parents
- The use of face coverings at GSHS
- The School Day for September 2020
- Information on Code of Conduct, Uniform and equipment
- A letter from North Tyneside about safer travel to school.

We very much look forward to your child starting back at school in September.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Wilkinson