



George Stephenson High School

16 July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following the announcement on Monday 12th July and the Government's plan to proceed with the lifting all restrictions as part of Step 4 of the Roadmap, we have now received the schools operational guidance which can be found here: [Schools COVID-19 operational guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

We are working through this guidance to assess the changes that we will need to make for the new academic year in September.

Highlights of the key issues that schools will have to account for are set out below:

- Bubbles or separation of children is no longer necessary and social distancing is no longer a requirement. This means we can have things like assemblies again and students can mix across year groups at break and lunchtime. However, we must be ready to re-introduce bubbles if needed
- Schools will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing – this will be done by NHS Test and Trace instead.
- From 16th August 2021 children under 18 will no longer be required to self-isolate if contacted by test and trace as a close contact. Instead they will be advised to take a PCR test (18-year olds will be treated in the same way until 4 months after their 18th birthday to enable them to get fully vaccinated).
- Face coverings are not likely to be required (the exception being where there is an outbreak based on advice by the local Director of Public Health). However, since I started writing this letter the advice on school transport has already changed. The operational guidance now says: "From July 19, the government is removing the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school." It is not known yet if this advice will cover areas other than transport for pupils.
- We will of course keep this under review and will contact you again towards the end of the summer to clarify the expectations around face coverings.
- Even if students and staff are not required to wear face coverings, they will be allowed to do so if they want.
- Schools must develop an outbreak management plan
- The following control measures are required in all schools:
 - Ensuring good hygiene for everyone
 - Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes
 - Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
 - Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19. Pupils and staff should not come into school if they have symptoms (even if they have been vaccinated), a positive test result or are quarantining after a trip abroad.

- Testing
 - All staff and secondary pupils should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open over the summer
 - Testing will be widely available over the summer and kits can be collected from community pharmacies
 - **Secondary school pupils** should receive two on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. Schools can stagger return of pupils across the first week to manage this. Pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September.
 - **Secondary schools** should also retain a small asymptomatic testing site (ATS) on-site until further notice
 - All school staff should continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September
 - All CEV children and young people should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

Given that the timing of these changes is so close to the end of term you will appreciate the challenges in terms of putting them in place.

At the moment we have decided on the following things for next year:

- We will continue to have a slightly staggered entry to the building 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.
- At the end of day Year 7 and Year 8 will be allowed to leave a few minutes before the older students (not before 2.55)
- We will keep the one-way system on corridors and stairwells will be one way too
- We will ensure that, wherever possible, students use the outdoor routes around the building to minimise passing other students in corridors.
- We will revert to having one break (10.40 – 11.00) but there may be some changes as to the areas of school that students are allowed to go
- At lunch we will move back to two sittings at same times they were (but we are looking at if we can keep Year 7 and Year 8 separate, and will allow Year 7 to eat first)
- Good hygiene and hand sanitising must be maintained and there will be hand sanitisers on corridors and in every classroom as well as indoor and outdoor wash basins at different points around the school
- We are likely to ask staff to continue to sanitise hands at the start and end of each lesson
- PE kit - we are now able to use the changing rooms so all students will be expected to attend school in full uniform every day and will need to bring their PE kit in with them on the days that they have PE.
- Students will be tested for Covid 19 on two separate occasions at the start of term if they have consented.
- Robust procedures will be in place should a child or member of staff display symptoms of coronavirus
- Windows will still be open for increased ventilation

Return to school

The government have said that secondary schools are able to implement a **phased return** during the first week of term to allow all students to be tested on their return to school. As you can imagine, testing 1200 students for COVID-19 will again be a significant undertaking and we will need to stagger the return of students throughout the week to ensure this is carried out in a safe, well-planned and effective manner, ensuring the health and safety of all students and staff. **However, we are trying to get all of the students back in as quickly as we can working and we appreciate your understanding around this.**

As also outlined in the government guidance, students will be **tested TWICE in school** during the initial return period, each test being 3-5 days apart. Students will therefore already have returned to school by their second COVID-19 tests and so their second test will be organised during the normal school day. Following these two in-school tests, we will **provide all students with two rapid tests to use each week at home**. Staff will also take two tests each week at home.

In order to manage this phased return, **students will therefore need to come into school for their first lateral flow test the day before they return to school for lessons. They will only attend that day for their LFD test.** Their second test will be spaced out over the following week; they will simply come out of a lesson for their test once they are back in school full time.

Therefore, **students will return to school on the following dates:**

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
Wed 1 Sept (Training Day)	LFD Test 1						
Thurs 2 Sept	In School all day			LFD Test 1	LFD Test 1	LFD Test 1 Induction PM	
Fri 3 Sept	In School all day	LFD Test 1	LFD Test 1	In School all day	In School all day		LFD Test 1 Induction PM
Mon 6 Sept	In School all day						

Details will follow as to the exact time students will need to attend for their LFD test.

The full timetable will then begin on Monday 6th September.

The government is advising all secondary students and staff to be tested for Covid 19, before returning to the classroom after the summer. Although this testing is not compulsory, or a return to school conditional on having a test, we strongly advise all students to comply.

Those students taking the self-administered test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose. The tests we are using next term are the Orient Gene tests which only need a nasal swab. If any students are unable to undertake a nasal swab we do have some supplies of the Innova test we can use (throat swab). Once the students have taken two tests on-site, they will be provided with home test kits for regular twice weekly testing at home. Students should participate in the tests on site to ensure they are practising the correct technique to ensure competence in home testing, otherwise they cannot be issued with home testing kits.

We understand that some of our young people may be anxious about the testing. Please reassure them there is nothing to worry about.

Students will be tested in one of the Gyms within our school building. Please ensure that your child arrives on time as we want to avoid congestion or students loitering unnecessarily.

After your child has received their test, they will be directed to leave via the main school gate at the front of the school. It is important they do not loiter outside the school to meet up with their friends as this could be counter-productive to school's safe return.

Students are not required to wear their uniform as they will only be on site for a matter of minutes however, we would advise wearing sensible/appropriate clothing and to keep a check on the weather as there is a possibility that students may need to wait outside until they are called forward.

They will only be on site for around twenty minutes.

We have had a number of queries about young people who have had COVID-19. The advice is that anyone who has previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result should NOT be re-tested within 90 days of that test unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19. You will therefore not need to undertake these tests if this applies to you.

Finally, just to remind you that if a parent does not give consent and the child does not undertake a test on the allocated day, they will still be able to return as normal the following day.

Consent

Of course, we will need your consent for your child to be tested. Testing is voluntary but strongly encouraged. We will only be able to test your child if you give consent. If you gave consent back in March for the in-school testing you do NOT need to do so again. If you are new to the school or did not give consent last time, please can you complete the consent form in the link below. In some browsers you may need to copy the link to the browser window.

<https://tinyurl.com/efmf3kzt>

If you are happy for your child to be tested in school you MUST complete this form to give consent.

Summer and autumn testing arrangements – a message from the Government

Thank you for your continued engagement in the Covid-19 testing programme. The asymptomatic testing programme is being paused for students in secondary schools and colleges that will be closed over the summer holidays. Your child should continue to test twice a week if they are attending face to face education in school/college over the summer.

If you or your child wish to access rapid lateral flow testing, you can continue to do so by ordering LFD test kits from GOV.UK or by collecting kits from your local pharmacy.

If your child is transitioning to new educational settings, they should start testing on arrival at their new setting in the autumn.

Testing twice weekly is helping us stay ahead of the virus by spotting new outbreaks quickly and plan our response. The preparations that schools and colleges are advised to take are subject to further public health advice and the latest position on prevalence of the COVID-19 virus.

Changes to contact tracing in education and childcare settings

As you know, the Prime Minister announced on 12 July that Step 4 of the roadmap would go ahead on 19 July. One of the key changes that will take place from 19 July is that education and childcare settings will no longer be asked to conduct routine contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case – or in the case of children – the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts.

NHS Test and Trace already manages the contact tracing process for the rest of society – including children who have recorded a positive PCR test – and has expertise in supporting people to identify close contacts.

A separate letter sent by ParentMail and on our website sets out in more detail below how that process will work and what you need to do if your child tests positive for COVID-19.

Mobile Phones

We also need to inform you of a change to the school's mobile phones policy. From September, the use of mobile phones on site will be completely forbidden for all Year 7 – Year 11 students. Students may keep their phones in their bags for use before and after school, but phones must not be seen or heard while students are on the school premises.

We have taken this decision because the use of mobile phones in school has been increasingly causing significant problems, such as bullying, disruption to lessons, and inappropriate web and social media usage. We are also aware of emerging research that excessive mobile phone use can have a significant detrimental impact on the mental health of young people. By making the school a mobile phone free zone, our students will be able to have a break from the pressures and distraction of social media. As a school, we want to encourage our students to talk to each other and develop friendship groups at break and lunchtime, as opposed to using their mobile phones. We feel this is the best way to support students in meeting the school's core values of being ready, respectful, and safe.

Students found using their mobile phone during school hours will have their phone confiscated and it will be returned to them at the end of the school day. If the phone is confiscated twice in a term, the student's parent/carer will need to come to school to pick up the phone.

If you need to contact your child during the school day, we ask that you ring the school or send an email to enquiries@gshs.org.uk and we will pass on the message. If your child needs to contact you, they should speak to their Guidance Manager who will arrange for them to do so. Parents should be aware that if they text their child during school hours their child will not be able to check their messages until they have left the school premises.

Further details can be found in the Policies section of the school website.

Uniform

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind parents of the dress code and ask for your support in advance of the summer holidays when many of you will be organising new uniform for your child.

As with last year, we are not proposing any changes to our School Uniform for 2021-22 and parents must purchase trousers and skirts from Emblematic only. They are bespoke for our school and branded with the school badge. This will apply to all year groups. This means that the school sweater and tie, trousers, skirts and PE polo shirt and sweatshirt must be purchased from our uniform supplier, Emblematic. We have been in contact with Emblematic and are able to update you on the service they are providing which are as follows:

- Emblematic are open as normal and back to their normal service.
- Opening hours are from Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. (They will also open on Saturdays from June to September)
- They are currently individually serving customers through a screen, but this may change going towards the summer.
- They have stopped their "click and collect" option, as parents can now pop in and purchase.
- As always, Emblematic have asked us to express to parents the need to order early so they can deliver all the correct uniform, with plenty of time available for exchanges.
- The price list is now available on the school website and through the Emblematic website.
- Emblematic will work with parents where your son/daughter may need different length or waist sizes. Emblematic is also a supplier of workwear for businesses, meaning they have access to a number of suppliers from school ages to adults. If this is applicable to you, please contact the shop soon and start discussions on your requirements that that purchases can be sourced sooner rather than later.

Please can we remind you that we do NOT allow:

- Brown or any other colour of shoes.
- Trainers, trainer-type boots, boots, ankle boots, cross trainer shoes, ANY branded shoes (e.g. Nike, Adidas, Puma, Umbro, La Coste, Converse, Vans, Stan Smiths, Vivienne Westwood etc.), canvas shoes of any kind, plimsolls or sandals – no coloured laces, logos or labels.
- Any "extreme" hairstyle or extreme hair colouring
- Any jewellery other than one ring only (on either hand), a maximum of two ear rings, one in each earlobe (simple studs or sleepers) and a watch.
- Any other rings/studs/bars used in face, mouth, ear or body piercing are not allowable in school for health and safety reasons.
- Ear expanders must not be worn.

- Acrylic or gel nails or nail varnish of any sort
- Tattoos or body art
- Excessive make up (no false or semi-permanent lashes, no fake tan, no drawn on eyebrows)
- Hoodie-style jackets/sweatshirts, tracksuit-type or sports tops, or denim jackets for outdoor wear.
- Hats or Hoods in school

Parents are advised not to purchase trainer/casual style shoes which are marketed as school shoes by various retailers. Please refer to the GSHS Wynsors brochure on our website for advice and guidance on the types of shoes which are acceptable. In addition, Emblematic have a link on their website (on our school page) to an e-supplier for acceptable footwear. However, it is not essential to follow this link. If you do have any questions about uniform then please contact your child's Guidance Manager at your earliest convenience.

We reserve the right to confiscate or insist that students remove any item which contravenes these guidelines or which is a potential safety hazard. Students who refuse to remove such items will remain in isolation until they do so. If there are exceptional circumstances, please discuss this with your child's Guidance Manager at your earliest convenience. The school and the Governing Body reserve the right to determine what is acceptable with regards to uniform and footwear.

Finally, we do have a very small stock of uniform in school which will be distributed to those families who we know are most in need.

PE Kit

We are now able to use the changing rooms so all students will be expected to attend school in full uniform every day and will need to bring their PE kit in with them on the days that they have PE.

Catering

There will be a full catering service for students from the day that they are in school (Thursday 2 September for Year 7, Friday 3 September for Year 10 and 11 and Monday 6 September for everyone). Please remember to top up their cashless card for lunchtime.

Transport

Nexus are running the scholars' buses and they are operating to the timetable on our website. From July 19, the government is removing the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school. Nexus have said that they recommend that children and young people aged 11 and over continue to wear a face covering when travelling to secondary school or college.

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.

Can we finally ask you two things around dropping off and picking up students – the local authority have modified 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.

Free School Meals Vouchers over the summer

Families will receive **£15 per child per week** for all those registered on **income related free school meals**. North Tyneside will pay this in **two lump sums so families will receive £55 then £50 which covers the 7 weeks**. The first voucher has an activation date of the first week of the holidays (19th July for £55) and then another one will be sent on the 9th August for £50.

The vouchers will be sent by email from Edenred on or around the two dates of 19 July and 9 August.

This is a one-off food grant to support families and help to manage the additional expense they will have during the summer break when children don't receive free school meals.

The vouchers **must** be spent by the 31st August.

Any queries please contact participation@northtyneside.gov.uk

We know that you may have some concerns over the time your child may have missed at school this year 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. 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.

Over the summer, we feel it is important that students take a well-earned break and get outdoors and begin to socialise with friends and family in line with government guidelines. I hope you and your family can manage to have an enjoyable and relaxing summer.

Yours faithfully



Mr Wilkinson

Headteacher