

September 1st 2020

Dear Parent(s) / Carer(s),

I hope that you and your families are well, and that you have enjoyed the summer break.

Prior to the end of the school term, I wrote to you with details of our plans for full reopening in September. This letter, with an accompanying video, are both still available from the home page of our website. I wanted to write again ahead of September 7th – the date when we welcome students back – to provide both updates and key reminders. These feature under the headings below. The Department for Education (DfE) updated their guidance, “What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term” on August 21st. This can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

I have attached a recently released government leaflet “Returning to secondary school: what parents need to know”. This covers the key themes from the link above in a question and answer format.

Attendance

Attendance will be mandatory in September, as the government expects all pupils to attend school. The usual rules will apply, meaning we will be recording attendance and following up on any absences. If your children have been staying at home due to shielding guidance, the government paused this guidance on 1 August. This means students should come back to school in September. However, if you have received clinical or health advice that your children should still remain at home, please contact us so we are aware of and can discuss the situation. We are also here to respond to any concerns you have about your child attending school.

Pastoral Support

We appreciate the importance of strong pastoral support being in place as students return to school following the lockdown period. Form tutors, heads of year and other members of the pastoral team will continue to play a strong role in this sense. Please do not hesitate to contact your child’s tutor should you have any concerns.

Safety Measures

The safety measures we will be taking are outlined in our risk assessment and the letter I wrote in July (both available from our website homepage). Some of the key points are included below to serve as reminders:

- Individuals who are unwell with coronavirus (COVID-19) or are displaying COVID-19 symptoms must not attend school. This also applies if someone in their household has COVID-19 or is displaying symptoms. Please follow government guidance on the length of isolation quarantine.
- Hands must be cleaned / cleansed regularly. Students should use the hand sanitiser outside each classroom to cleanse their hands before they enter. Hands must be cleansed prior to lunch and break, and when students arrive at school.
- Hands must be cleansed /cleaned following the removal of face coverings used on transport.
- Students should aim to maintain social distancing of 2m between themselves and staff at the school as much as possible.

Face Coverings

There has been plenty of media coverage regarding face coverings in recent days. Using the Department for Education guidance released, the senior leadership team have considered our situation and particular circumstances carefully. This guidance makes it clear that face coverings are required **for areas where there has been government intervention / lockdown**, and should be worn "when moving around indoors, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain." There is currently no specific extra government intervention or lockdown in Norfolk. Our local situation, combined with the measures we have put in place to maintain year group bubbles and lessen movement around the school, have led us to the decision that the wearing of face coverings will be **optional**. This 'option' refers to wearing the coverings as students move between lessons and at social times. They **should** be worn on school transport as described below.

We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and respond to any updated guidance released. Currently, the Department for Education has made it clear that coverings do not need to be worn in classrooms / lessons:

"On the basis of current evidence, in light of the mitigating measures education settings are taking, and the negative impact on communication, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible." (Department for Education – Face coverings in education August 26th 2020)

It is vital that students remove coverings safely by using the fastenings (or the part that is not in contact with the mouth area). Once removed, the coverings should be stored in a plastic bag, or placed in a covered bin in the case of disposable masks. It is also extremely important that hands are sanitised / washed following the removal of the face coverings. Students will receive guidance on this routine on their first morning in school. Coverings worn should not feature offensive / inappropriate logos.

Returning From Abroad

The summer has featured changing guidance in terms of return travel from a variety of countries, and there are a number of destinations where a 14 day quarantine period is required on return. The list of these countries is available via this website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

Please do contact us at the school to discuss your individual situation if you have returned from abroad after August 24th.

School Transport

When I wrote to you in July, the advice on face coverings for school buses was that it was not required and was optional. The government and local authority position on this matter has developed during the course of the summer break, and the local authority guidance now reads as follows:

"Face coverings are mandatory on public transport and required on all other school transport services for those aged 11 and over."

We therefore will be expecting students using school buses to wear a face covering on their journeys unless individuals are exempt. It is important to recognise that a face covering does not have to be in the form of a mask. If students are not wearing face coverings, the school is likely to be contacted by Norfolk County Council (NCC) transport, and the matter will be approached in the same manner as any other behaviour issue or failure to comply with the conditions of travel. We will work with students and families to resolve any issues, but if there is persistent non-compliance it may lead to a temporary travel ban or withdrawal of transport on a long term basis to ensure the safety of all those travelling.

Please also consider and act on the following in relation to school transport:

- Social distancing will not apply on dedicated school transport, but students should sit with their year group bubbles – please discuss this with your child
- Please provide a plastic bag for your child to safely store their face covering during the course of the school day until it is needed for the return journey / for movement in corridors
- Please remind your child(ren) of the importance of hand cleansing once their face covering is removed

NCC transport has issued a guidance leaflet, which I have included with this letter.

School Arrival – Routes and Routines

The start to the school day is different to pre lockdown, and some of the key changes are included in the points below:

- A staggered start will be in place for those arriving on buses compared to pedestrians, cyclists and drop off by parents / carers. Please refer to the attached school day timings if you would like a reminder of this arrangement.
- All parents / carers are to use the sports hall car park if dropping off their child(ren).
- All student pedestrians should enter from the front of the school and walk through the route between bike sheds and the school hall. They should not go to or through reception.
- All students should go straight to form rooms on arrival, cleansing their hands before they enter the room. Those using buses / taxis should enter school through the back playground and remove face coverings / cleanse hands as described under transport (above).
- The new form room arrangements for tutor groups feature in a document attached with this letter – please share this with your children.

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning and Remote Learning

Staff have received guidance on curriculum delivery and coverage, and this will also be a focus on our training days prior to the start of term. The guidance has been developed using researched perspectives from experts / advisors and applying them to our context. Some key points in relation to our approach are listed below:

- The first two weeks will be used to 'relaunch' the curriculum, including recapping essential knowledge both from the remote learning period and earlier in the previous academic year. This will obviously not apply to year 7!
- This period will also include 'low stakes' assessment such as question and answer, quizzes and starters for ten. Findings will be used to mould future planning.
- More thorough / extensive assessment will be used as the half term progresses. For year 7, Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs) will be used to gauge academic potential. These will be extremely useful in the absence of SATs.

- A contingency plan will be in place should we have to supplement school based learning with remote learning, whether this is for individual students in response to a year group being advised to isolate, or any other partial / full closure. Our online learning provision will be developed further, with more details being provided for families in the future. Students will receive lessons on how to access and interact with the online learning platform.
- Our 'practical' approach to assessing work has been adapted to lower risk and address the practicalities of marking work in books. Students will keep their exercise books to lower any risk of transmission. Where teachers set work that will be marked / assessed, this will be on paper, which will be more practical to safely store for 72 hours prior to being handled by staff.

The contingency plan for remote learning has been updated in recent days to ensure it is line with the government's 'four tier' approach. The government guidance details how schools, depending on the tier of approach they are directed to take, may operate using a rota for different year groups, partially close for specific year groups, or close for all year groups. School would remain open for all children of critical workers and vulnerable young people, who would continue to attend full-time. It is clear in the guidance that the aim is for schools should remain open unless there are exceptional circumstances. In the event of these circumstances emerging (such as a rise in local infections or positive cases within the school setting), the school would be advised / directed of the approach we should take by the local authority and / or the government.

Food orders / use of the canteen

You should have received the menu and pre-ordering form via email last week. Ordering food via email prior to the start of term will ensure our catering team are organised for the first day back. Please use the order form provided. A reminder that food orders will need to be pre-paid using the wise-pay system, and there will be no cash uploading on site. If you encounter any problems placing your order please contact the school and ask for the catering team.

Behaviour

A reminder that our behaviour policy (available via our website) now features an appendix specific to behaviour expectations in light of the COVID-19 situation. Key points will be relayed to students at the start of term, and we would appreciate your support in discussing this document with your child(ren). Behaviour that puts other students at risk will be treated extremely seriously. For example, a student deliberately coughing or spitting over another individual is likely to result in a fixed term exclusion, and repeat offences will result in escalating sanctions.

Other Key Reminders

- There should be no school visits without prior arrangement – please call / email in the first instance if you need to visit the school.
- Please ensure that your items brought to school are labelled, including water bottles, lunch boxes and school uniform items.
- Please aim to ensure your child has the right equipment in their pencil cases. We will issue pens etc at times but need to minimise this. In addition to pens, and pencils, it would be very useful for your child to have a glue stick.

Heads of Year and Staffing Updates

Towards the end of the term, there have been some staffing changes in the school. I am delighted to welcome the following staff and look forward to working with them in the future:

- Miss Ashley Bourke – teacher of Modern Foreign Languages (full time)
- Miss Victoria Crowe – teacher of Modern Foreign Languages (part time)
- Mr Matthew Vanston – teacher of Geography (part time)

The Head of Year roles in 2020-21 will be as follows:

Year 7	Mrs K Holmes
Year 8	Mrs M Webb & Mrs T Burkert
Year 9	Mr D Hester
Year 10	Miss S Field
Year 11	Miss A Barker

We look forward to welcoming your child(ren) back to Hobart and supporting them in their continuing learning journey.

Kind regards

Mr R Li-Rocchi
Head of School