



HECKMONDWIKE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

CEP/JDN

6 July 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

September 2020 – initial thoughts on how we will stay safe

I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well after the first weekend of reduced lockdown restrictions. In addition to announcements relating to foreign travel and the ability to get a haircut again, you will no doubt have heard the Government announcement that schools will be open for all pupils from September 2020.

As you know, we have been open to some groups of students since the Government announced lockdown in March. In June, we were pleased to be able to welcome many Year 10 and Year 12 students back into school for some face-to-face sessions in addition to our online learning provision. We approached this with great caution, reviewing all the scientific advice to ensure that we could be as safe as possible. This has gone extremely well as our safety measures and risk assessments have been robust and our staff and our students have worked well in partnership to keep school safe. Thank you to all those parents who felt able to send your children back into school – it has been lovely to see them and they appear to have enjoyed their return visits, although some appeared to find being up at such an early time again the biggest challenge!

We are delighted that we can now look forward to seeing all our wonderful students back in school next term. As you would imagine, we will be very busy in the next couple of weeks planning, completing new and detailed risk assessments, and working out exactly what school will look like and feel like when your child returns. Schools will be closed over the summer to students giving staff both a well-deserved break and allowing for further planning refinements to take place.

In the guidance published yesterday the Government has stated: *'Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)'*.

We are working hard to consider how we group students together, ensure that we reduce contact between different groups of students, and keep the stringent cleaning and disinfecting processes we already have in place to ensure that our site is as safe as can be for your child.

We will send out further detail before school opens again in September, but in the meantime, there are some key points that you need to be aware of when thinking about and discussing with your child in advance of next term. By agreeing common principles and expectations, together we can all help our school stay as safe as possible as we open our doors to all students.

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Health

Please ensure that if anyone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms, your child does NOT attend school. Any child or staff member who develops symptoms in the school day will be sent home immediately. You must follow the Government guidance 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'

If anyone in your household is displaying any symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive, you MUST inform school by telephone.

Behaviour

Your child will be expected to follow strict behaviour rules relating to physical contact with other students whilst in school and keeping their hands clean. This is to protect your child, their peers and the staff in the school.

Students will be expected to wash their hands regularly and use hand sanitiser. This will be provided by school and is already in place on all corridors and in classrooms, although you are of course welcome to send your child to school with their own hygiene equipment if you prefer.

Equipment

Students and staff will not be wearing face coverings in school. The Government advice is quite clear that this is not necessary. If a face covering is used on public transport to get to school, it should be removed on arrival and stored safely in a plastic bag inside school bags.

It will be more important than ever that your child has their own equipment in school to ensure that this does not need to be shared. Please ensure that over the summer you support us and your child in ensuring they return fully equipped and prepared for all lessons.

Travel

The Government has advised walking or cycling to school wherever possible to reduce the use of public transport. Given the distance some of our students travel to come here, we recognise that this may not be possible, but if they travel by car, please drop your child off away from the school site in order to minimise crowding and congestion around our perimeter and please reinforce the need for them to retain social distancing from the moment they step outside your vehicle.

Attendance

The Government has relaxed the rules on attendance during lockdown. However, this will change in September and attendance will become mandatory again. The Government guidance says:

'Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- *parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age;*
- *schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;*
- *the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.'*

We are grateful for the ongoing support that our parents give us throughout the year and we are proud of our levels of attendance, but we are also mindful of the challenges some families have faced through this

period of lockdown. If your child falls into an extremely clinically vulnerable category or remains under the care of a specialist health care professional, you should discuss their care before returning to school in September and talk to your SSM about the situation. Where children are not able to attend school, as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, they will not be penalised – we will work with you to try to maintain your child's education throughout the time they are away from lessons within the restrictions of any health issues.

Catering

The catering service will re-open in September and lunches will be available again. Students eligible for free school meals will return to having their lunch at school and will no longer receive lunch vouchers. This is in line with the Government scheme and what is being provided nationally for all students. Please see the separate letter sent from our Finance Director last week in relation to school lunch payments.

Uniform

Students will be expected to wear school uniform again from September. The guidance states that this does not need washing more frequently or any differently to what you would have done prior to Covid-19. Hopefully the return to wearing our unique uniform will help all feel a sense of normality!

Curriculum

We know that most of our students have worked incredibly hard to sustain their studies during lockdown and so we feel confident that they will pick up their studies again quickly; we look forward to getting back to near normal in September and will address any educational concerns in the usual way as and if they arise.

We understand that some of you and your children will be anxious about returning in September, after some months out of school. Please be reassured that we are taking exceptional measures to make our school as safe as can be. We will be providing additional emotional and wellbeing support for any students that need it and will also be providing additional opportunities to support learning where this is required. We will communicate again before the end of the academic year to outline the plans for the first week back, which may need to involve some sort of staggered start to the year in order to ensure all students returning are safe and clear on procedures, but we will confirm that once plans are finalised. **Please note that school will be closing early on Friday 17 July**, as is usual on the final day, and so students in Years 10 and 12 who are in school that day for face-to-face sessions will complete all sessions but those vulnerable and key worker students who are also in school will finish at 12.30pm.

Although it feels like this situation has lasted forever, in fact, most students have lost, at worst, only 62 school days of face-to-face learning to date and very many of them have worked incredibly hard using online resources and lessons provided by our hardworking and dedicated teachers. We will work together in September to move forward to make sure your child gets the great and safe education they deserve.

With very best wishes



Cath Proud
Associate Headteacher