



Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope you and your family remain safe and well as the lockdown continues to unwind. Following the recent Department for Education guidelines published on 2nd July, **this letter provides some headline information outlining the operational and logistical approaches Great Sankey are taking to minimise risk**, ensuring that all students and staff can return safely to school in September and benefit from as normal a school experience under the guidance and provide a broad, balanced and meaningful learning experience to the children in our care.

Given the length and complexity of the plans that we have produced, and to best support you and your child's return in September, **we are creating a guidance booklet for parents and students and this will be published on our school website by Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July**. It is highly likely that the DfE guidance we are working to will change at some point in time and we will react and update you accordingly.

**The booklet will include every aspect of your child's day:** from their journeying to and arrival in school; maintaining good hygiene systems; what a typical day will look like; what they need to bring to school each day; how they will depart from school and what they should do if they have any concerns. In addition, there will be detailed information on: school operations; curriculum; uniform; behaviour; pastoral support; assessment and contingency planning for those displaying symptoms, suspected cases and plans to minimise disruption to learning.

**In recognition that our new Year 7s missed out on their physical transition days on site**, we are arranging for them to join us for part of our staff training day on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September, with specific details and timings being sent separately to our new Year 7 parents. This will enable us to welcome them to the school and give them our undivided attention in their House Teams to ensure they start the new academic year as positively as possible. During our first two weeks, if DfE guidance allows, we are also planning to hold a 'Meet the Form Tutor' evening for parents at school.

**To ensure our wider return is managed in a safe and structured manner we will be introducing a staggered start to the academic year.** This will allow us to walk through our procedures and routines with each Year group in detail supported by a bespoke re-orientation programme at the start of each day for each Year group with their Form Tutor. To facilitate this, **Years 11, 10 and 7 will return on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September and Students in Year 8 and 9 will be asked to stay at home on this day. On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, all students will be expected in school.** For the Autumn term the expectation is that all staff and students will return to school in September for full days, full timetables, in full uniform and, at the time of writing and following DfE guidance, face coverings are not to be worn in school and must be removed as students enter the school site.

We are aware that some schools are reducing the number of subjects children are studying at GCSE to create more time for GCSE for targeted subjects. **We are, however, committed to our students' entitlement to receiving a full and meaningful curriculum** and believe our intervention programme will enable students to not only catch up but also put them in the best position possible for their GCSE and A Level exams whatever year group they are in. Our priority, understandably, will be Year 11 and 13 but once DfE catch-up funding details have been published we will deliver a programme of in-school sessions, after school sessions, Saturday school and holiday school for other key groups and those in most need.

Subject areas have identified the key areas of learning that were delivered under lockdown and **during the first two weeks teachers will revisit this and essential knowledge will be reviewed regularly throughout the school year**. We will also continue to develop high quality blended learning to ensure that where a class, group or small number of students need to



self-isolate, or there should be a local lockdown, we will be able to instantly revert to home learning via Google Classroom.

**On each school day, students will arrive at school promptly for an 8.25am start and they will be directed to go straight to their Year group zone** for a daily 30-minute tutor session. Initially, this will enable House teams to check in with students and see how they are managing their return to school and, moving forward, this regular slot of time will play an essential part of our recovery curriculum programme. From September, following the consultation earlier in the year, **our school day will now finish at 2.40pm each day and we will facilitate a staggered departure** that will allow for an orderly and socially distanced exit from school for each year group to ensure that students can begin their journey home safely.

Throughout the day, **students will be in placed in year group bubbles and zoned into specific areas of school for the majority of their lessons**, with staff moving to the students and with students taking staggered breaks and lunches to minimise year groups mixing with each other and thereby decreasing volume and traffic on the corridors.

**As students arrive on site and move between lessons they will be asked to ensure they clean their hands regularly.** Practical subjects (Art, Music, Drama, Design Technology and Computer Science) will continue with increased cleaning protocols being implemented between each lesson and throughout the day. **On days when children have practical PE lessons, we ask that they arrive in their school PE kit with additional outer layers, as this will remove the need to use changing rooms.**

We do not underestimate the importance of our role in helping our students and staff to recover emotionally from the impact of this pandemic and we recognise that for each individual this will be very different and positive home school partnerships will be essential. **All of our staff are accessing updated mental health training, with additional members of the Pastoral Team due to undertake the Mental Health First Aid Training.** In addition, during lockdown the welfare calls system has been widely appreciated by families and we aim to build on the success of this and provide termly contact for each family through an adapted model.

Our approach has so far been cautious, phased and participative and this will continue, however, as a community we will need to remain vigilant and respond to any change in circumstance, reviewing things daily to ensure the safety of our students and staff. As you can imagine with the daily updates and changes we receive from the DfE our provisional plans are subject to approval from the Trust but we wanted to give you an overview before we close for Summer. I hope that the information shared today demonstrates that we are taking all required and necessary measures to ensure students and staff are as safe as possible when we return in September.

Like all schools, as the summer term draws to a close we are planning for new staff to arrive and thank staff and bid farewell to those moving on and this year is no exception. I would like to take a moment, however, to mention four members of staff in particular who will be leaving the Great Sankey family: Miss Johnson, who has been Head of Drama and helped put on some spectacular school shows over the past 13 years; Mr Davies, who has been a dedicated and valued member of the RS Department for 23 years; Ms Cunningham who has been at Great Sankey for 23 years and in that time has been a long serving governor and led the highly successful Social Science department; and finally Mr Gee. Mr Gee has been here so long he is almost part of the furniture! His passion for sport, students and Great Sankey is enormous. His contribution to school over the past 34 years, be it on the sports field, in the hills doing Duke of Edinburgh or on the corridor supporting and encouraging everyone to do their best, is nothing short of inspirational. We wish them all the best of luck!

Finally, in September some things will feel a little different, and as soon as the student guidance booklets are available we will inform you, but much about our school remains the same. Governors wanted to thank you for the goodwill you have shown to us all over the last few months; indeed your messages of support have sustained us through a very difficult period. I would also reassure you that we continue to be committed to a broad curriculum that values every student, to the continuous development of high-quality teaching and learning and to compassionate and expert pastoral care.

Whatever your plans for the summer, I hope you all have an enjoyable break, so that in September, we all come back refreshed and ready for the challenges that we will undoubtedly face.

Yours faithfully,



Mr John Shannon  
Headteacher