



A warm welcome back to Norham High School, your COVID safe school:

Let me start by saying I hope this letter finds you, your family and friends well.

We are genuinely excited to see all of our wonderful pupils again and especially welcoming our new Year 7. The letter below is designed to outline the main actions being taken in order to keep children and staff safe. I have not listed every single detail as the document would become challenging to maintain / update and to read as time goes on.

As you will have read on my Facebook post (21st August) a range of details were shared to provide you with a summary of what we would do to maintain safety to the highest standards. This letter therefore adds to that and provides greater levels of detail so we can assure you our actions are robust and go well beyond what many other schools can / are doing. As we are a smaller school, we have used this to our advantage to maximise the safety of your children and our staff.

Year group bubbles, class sets and subjects:

All year groups will not only be kept in bubbles, but will have their very own area of the school where they will be taught. In this area, pupils will have their Head of Year and a link member of the Senior Team so that we essentially operate 5 small schools within a single school building.

This means that while some schools have experienced issues with pupils mixing in corridors or communal areas, we will have eliminated this as a potential risk factor:

- Year 7 – Based in the technology teaching area
- Year 8 – Based in Science labs
- Year 9 – Based in the upper level Humanities teaching area
- Year 10 – Based in the Maths classrooms
- Year 11 – Based in the English teaching area
- CRB pupils will be based in the CRB area unless they access more mainstream lessons then they will be with their mainstream year group with support.

In the main, pupils will stay in one room where they are being taught and so there will be no / minimal sharing of desks. There may be at times a need to “sort” pupils based on a class sets, where this is the case and a pupil moves room **within** their bubble, pupils will give their desk an antiviral wipe before moving and place wipes in a pedal bin so all wipes are stored with a lid capturing any potential viral particles.

Pupils will be met by tutors each morning (on tennis courts) and be issued timetables by their tutor on their first day in school, details of how / when pupils meet tutors are shared further below.

Teaching:

Teachers will carousel around the teaching areas so there is no need for pupil movement between lessons, again, eliminating an unnecessary risk factor seen in some other schools. While teachers move, supervision will be provided by the Head of Year, link SLT and additional support staff ensuring pupils stay safe.

Desks have been arranged so that all desks face the front of the class and of course, all pupils have their own equipment packs so that there is no physical sharing of basic equipment. There will be no practical lessons (Music, Technology / food, PE etc) for the first 2 weeks – these will be theory. During PE, pupils will complete orienteering or be taken on a walk and achieve “the mile-a-day” so they do not need PE kit until mid-September, more details are shared below in our PE section of this letter.



Staggered start / end and arrival and exit to the building:

On Wednesday 2nd September, Year 7 will arrive at school using the main entrance / reception area and be warmly welcomed from 9.00am with fun and exciting activities commencing at 9.15am- please bring sports kit in your bag, don't worry if it's not Norham specific PE kit. We ask parents / carers to maintain social distancing and queue at the reception area - we will have staff to assist. Year 7 have their own bespoke transition plan for Wednesday and will be fully supported in understanding how / where they will work.

On Thursday, **all year groups return** and have staggered start / finish times.

Year 7, 8 and 9 will meet their tutors on the tennis courts (direct access from Biddlestone Crescent). Year groups will be asked to keep separate and staff will assist. We recommend you arrive no later on the school site than 8.20am as school starts at 8.25am and pupils will be escorted 1 year group at a time into their designated area of the building.

Year 10 and 11 will also meet tutors on the tennis courts but will arrive at 8.35am and enter the building at 8.40am so there is adequate space to support social distancing.

Year 7 / 8 will leave at 2.40pm. Year 7 via the main entrance / reception area, Year 8 via back school gate.

Years 9 / 10 leave at 2.50pm. Year 9 via the main entrance and year 10 via the maths staircase / back gate.

Year 11 will leave at 2.55 via the back gate (again, Biddlestone Crescent) during the first week, however, many will commence additional support lessons during week 2 and so will remain in the building until 3.30pm at the earliest with some lessons finishing at 4.00pm. Please note, these lessons are **compulsory** and part of our standards / expectations, they will form part of the Year 11 timetable. Any pupil who cannot attend on a specific day for any reason will discuss this with their Head of Year.

Any child who accesses Local Authority transport (usually CRB) will leave school at 2.50pm, Y11s will have alternate transport planned / provided where required - by week 3 we hope some after school clubs / activities will commence as mentioned in my Facebook post, these will be kept separate so that Year 9 and 10 could attend drama club on different days (as example).

Break / Lunch Time:

As you know we are installing a cashless system so there is no need for money to change hands thus limiting any risk. Staff will buy lunch using contactless. All pupils have a pin code that is on our new ordering system (specifically designed to support our COVID measures) and a bar code that we will print for them. The bar code will be used by Year 7, 8 and 9 to purchase break / lunch time items. The pin code will be used for charging of Year 10 / 11 so that break / lunch are efficient & effective.

All food orders will be **placed during the morning tutorial session** and while the break menu is limited, by developing the system we have, we will have one of the most diverse hot food lunch menus in the borough – this is thanks to our extensive work with catering and specifically our Head Chef, Wendy.

We have extended lunch by 10 minutes to accommodate distancing and individual year group “sittings”.

Year 7 will be escorted to and access the West Hall for the whole of break / lunch- they will be supervised while there. They will also be able to access our segregated playground.

Year 8 will access the West Hall (divided in 2) for break also and for the first 20 minutes of lunch.

Year 9 will access break food from a sheltered area of the playground, they will access lunch via the West Hall for the second 20 minutes of lunch. (Year 8 / 9 lunch 20 min lunch sittings will rotate to be fair).



Year 10 will have exclusive use of the “World Café” over break and lunch. This will act as a common room for them also and will allow them the opportunity to “earn” a Year 10 common room as a part of their rewards system next year.

Year 11 will have exclusive use of their two new common rooms over break / lunch time. Like all pupils, they will order items from an extensive menu- items will be delivered to their common room for them.

As normal, the CRB will go to the lunch hall 20 minutes before the mainstream school to ensure pupils do not queue for food and have plenty of time to eat their lunch.

An extra staff member has been allocated to sterilise all tables between use and the West Hall will be divided in 2 so that Year 7 have exclusive use of 1 side while Year 8 / 9 can use the other side in a carousel / staggered fashion. After week 2, Year 8 / 9 sittings will rotate.

Equipment and bags:

School bags are part of our school uniform and will be used to carry the personalised equipment packs we supply to children (see my Facebook post for details of equipment supplied), not to mention their trainers for their initial PE lessons (walking / orienteering) in the first 2 weeks. Pupils will only share non-basic school equipment in their bubbles - all of which has been ordered for them eg glue sticks, scissors.

PE in the future:

While pupils will complete the “mile-a-day” challenge / orienteering for the first 2 weeks in **normal uniform**, we ask that they bring spare trainers in their school bag so that they can participate in this in a comfortable manner. PE staff will endeavour to make this fun and challenging so that pupils have to think hard and work as a team within their bubbles – skills we value at Norham.

After week 2, we hope to commence a plan of PE activities that support good physical and mental health while maintaining distancing. As such, the school has already invested in new equipment that can be easily sterilised between use to help keep your children stimulated, yet safe!

For example, hockey sticks and badminton racquets will have handles sterilised between use and left in a solution to fully disinfect them overnight.

When such PE activities commence we will notify you, however, we plan for children being allowed to come to school wearing their official Norham PE kit (sports top and hoodie) on the day they have PE - this is critical as changing rooms are still not allowed to be used. Such a plan is also designed to support children being comfortable while participating in PE and of course support you in terms of rotating / washing and drying uniform quickly.

Masks / Visors:

The government has said there is no need to wear a face covering unless the local area is in lockdown. However, it is a human right to wear a mask if you choose to and we will fully support this. That said, between use, a mask should be stored in a plastic bag or a new one simply used - masks should not be stored in a pocket or loose in a school bag. Some staff with underlying health issues will wear a face mask / covering when in closer contact with children and of course, any child who themselves has an underlying health issue or has a close family relative with such an issue can wear a mask at all times if they choose. All you do is **simply notify the Head of Year** through an email or phone call to support us in managing this.



Pupils may wear a face covering while entering / exiting and moving to / from their classroom or social spaces, but again, these must be stored in a plastic bag. We would encourage these not to be worn during a teaching lesson as constant adjustment of a mask using the hands is **more likely to place the virus on to the mask and increase risk**. We encourage any child who struggles to maintain distance, to wear a face covering but in specific cases, staff will also wear a cover to help protect them and the child.

Please note, it is expected all pupils wear a face covering while travelling to / from school should they be **mixing** with children from other year groups. Eg a Year 10 walks to school with a Year 7 sibling. While this may seem silly (as they live together) it meets the government requirements of limiting transmission between year groups and is considered to be in the interests of public safety.

All children using public transport or entering shops while wearing school uniform must follow public rules and wear a face covering / maintain distancing where expected. Please ensure your child follows public rules especially while wearing our uniform with pride as they represent the school and I, we do not want any of our children to bring the school into disrepute by not following government rules while in uniform as this will not be tolerated.

Evidence shows viral transmission is more likely between staff, and so, **while not actually required**, we are considering the requirement that all staff will wear visors and / or masks / covers while moving around the building or when in meetings.

Furthermore, staff **will** wear plastic visors while teaching or delivering interventions. This goes above and beyond what is expected of government guidelines but, the purpose of this is to “catch” or direct any large water droplets (known to transmit the virus) downwards towards the floors which are sterilised every day. By wearing the visor, we maximise safety while ensuring all children can be clearly communicated with - critical to teaching and learning, this seems like a sensible and common sense approach!

Any staff member who needs to be closer than 1m to a pupil (for first aid or direct support) will wear a fluid resistant (surgical) face mask – not just a covering! They may also wear gloves and goggles / visor but will have hand sanitiser to use before and after breaking distancing should this be essential eg First Aid.

Hand washing / sterilisation:

Frequent hand-washing will be encouraged however, trying to manage all pupils accessing toilets could cause greater risk and so hand sanitiser will be readily available with sanitising stations being strategically placed around the building. Before entering the building or their bubble area, all pupils and staff will sanitise their hands, they will also do so before exiting their bubble or the building.

Please note, all open top bins have also been removed so that any towel used to dry hands is placed in a pedal operated bin with lid. Furthermore, at break / lunch times, staff will supervise fire doors at key points so that these can be kept open, thus reducing any risk from door handles. Please remind children to use handles however when opening / closing doors as these are regularly sterilised- it is harder to sterilise an entire door surface! Also please make it clear that a foot should not be used to open doors for any reason.



Test and trace:

Should your child become unwell we will contact you immediately and ask that you collect them from a safe place. They will be isolated from others but well supervised by our caring staff (socially distanced). We will inform you of the issue and ask that you arrange collection of your child as soon as possible. Should symptoms appear COVID related, you must arrange a test that day as a negative test will allow your child to return to school as soon as they are well enough to do so - we want your child in school and do not want them to miss any more education. Should a test be positive, we will notify all parents / carers who were a part of the bubble and ask them to stay off until they have sought medical advice or had a test and negative result have been secured - we all need to play our part here and must do this right!

Marking and feedback:

As paper / card are known to **absorb** the virus fairly well, pupil work books need not be wiped down between teachers marking / giving feedback. However, teachers can wear gloves to decrease possible transmission further to their hands. Any glossy covers (on textbooks for example) will be sterilised between lessons / pupil use or isolated for 72hrs after use as gloss material does not absorb viral particles.

It is important to know that while the viral particles can exist on a surface, the chances of them being transferred from **any** surface are now thought to be low and again, it is highly unlikely they can be transferred from paper to the hand or especially into the air.

Closing remarks:

I want to thank you all for your support over the last few months. While my team and I have all delivered on significant and rapid school improvement in the past, with your support, I believe we have come together as a new team delivering exactly what you, our pupils and community deserved!

Together, you as parents / carers, our pupils and the entire staff team have become a force for long-needed change and as you know, the improvements made in the months before COVID were vast.

Yes, when we return, things will be a little different but you have my own, and my team's assurance that this barrier will not slow us down in **our work with you** to make our school exceptional.

We know our attendance was among the best in the authority, we know we had among the lowest exclusions and virtually "zero" behaviour incidents (not something many can say), we know our pupils were enjoying school, being rewarded, attending our excellent clubs. We know our pupils became proud again, we know teaching and learning was as good as it always should have been... we know this because you, our pupils and Ofsted (Dec 2019) told us.

We know, together, we are "absolutely fantastic", September 2020 and GCSE's in 2021... bring it on!

Take care, stay safe.

Mr Conway

Proud Norham Head