



WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

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Executive Headteacher: John Barnes

Head of School: Jonathan Souter

20 August 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to share the details of our plan to return to school for the start of the new academic year in September. We are really looking forward to welcoming all of our pupils back in school; in what should resemble a normal school environment. We kindly ask that you carefully read the information contained in this letter as it details the arrangements for the first week of term for all pupils and around COVID testing for Key Stage 3 pupils before their return to school.

Monday 6th September

Teacher Training Day

Tuesday 7th September

Year 5 Pupils Information

On Tuesday 7th September we will welcome our new intake of Year 5 pupils for their first school day at Whytrig. Children should arrive at school at 8:50am through our main school gate, where they will be met by staff, before being taken to their new classroom by their form teacher. The children will follow the structure of a normal school day, with some of the activities we would normally do in transition week, designed to allow them to get to know the staff and their new classmates, as well as familiarise themselves with routines and their new surroundings. One of the administrative procedures we will need to do on their first day is to set them up with their biometric fingerprint, so that they can use the school canteen system. With this in mind, **we kindly ask that all Year 5 children bring a packed lunch on Tuesday 7th September.** For children who would usually receive a Free School Meal, a packed lunch will be provided for them. School will end at 3:30pm so you will need to arrange with your child how you intend them to go home. If you are collecting them from school, we would kindly remind parents and carers to wait for their child outside of the school gates.

Tuesday 7th September

Years 6, 7 and 8 Pupils Information

On Tuesday 7th September, we are staggering the arrival times of the other year groups to allow the new Year 5 children to have time to settle into school and then each subsequent year group. Children in the following year groups should arrive at school to be met on the yard by their form teachers on Tuesday 7th September through our main school gate at:

Year 6 – 9:25am

Year 7 – 9:30am

Year 8 – 9:35am

The children will follow the structure of a normal school day, with the morning session spent in form class and then timetabled lessons in the afternoon. The school day will end at 3:30pm for all children.

Wednesday 8th September and beyond

All pupils will arrive at school for 8:50am through our main school gate, where they will be met on the yard by their form teachers and normal timetabled lessons will take place. The school day will end at 3:30pm.

Attendance

All pupils are expected to attend school. Our usual school systems will be in place, meaning we'll be recording attendance and following up on any absences. Please contact us at the start of the school day if your child is absent for any reason.

In-School Lateral Flow Testing for KS3 pupils

As instructed by the government, we have to conduct two lateral flow tests for each child in Years 7 and 8 prior to their return to school and these will take place in the Sports Hall, on the following days:

Thursday 2nd September

11:30am - 1:00pm - Year 7 students in school for Covid test & then home.

Time	Y7 Student Group
11:30 - 12:15	Surnames A to M (inclusive)
12:15 - 1:00	Surnames N to Z (inclusive)

2:00pm - 3:30pm - Year 8 students in school for Covid test & then home.

Time	Y8 Student Group
2:00 - 2:45	Surnames A to G (inclusive)
2:45 - 3:30	Surnames H to Z (inclusive)

Monday 6th September

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11:30 - 12:15	Surnames A to M (inclusive)
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2:00pm - 3:30pm - Year 8 students in school for Covid test & then home.

Time	Y8 Student Group
2:00 - 2:45	Surnames A to G (inclusive)
2:45 - 3:30	Surnames H to Z (inclusive)

Following this letter, parents of Year 7 children and anybody who has joined us in Year 7 or Year 8 since March 2021 will receive an email asking them to complete a testing consent form.

The Curriculum and Timetable

Our curriculum and timetable will run as normal from September, with the full range of lessons on offer to our children and taught in specialist classrooms where appropriate. Unlike last year, the bubble system will not be in operation and staff will teach in their usual classroom bases and the children will move around the school to their lessons. Year 5 children will be taught for the majority of their lessons in their form classes by their form teachers, apart from lessons where specialist facilities are required such as PE and technology; all Key Stage 2 children are also timetabled for at least one of their Science lessons in the Science Lab as part of their curriculum offer.

Health and hygiene

Routines that have been well established over the course of the last eighteen months will still operate in school. Children will be expected to wash/sanitise hands regularly and procedures such as the 'catch it/bin it/kill it' when blowing noses will be in place as we continue to minimise the spread of germs. All desks and surfaces will be wiped down at the end of every lesson and the regular cleaning of school walkways and hand contact points will continue. Mask wearing is not expected in school, however if pupils or staff choose to wear them in the

corridors that is permitted. As always, we will watch developments closely and will continue to be guided by the Department for Education and the Local Authority. However, measures that were in place last year to prevent year groups mixing, such as separate entrances and staggered start and finish times, will no longer be the case this year.

Equipment/Phones

The children are now permitted to bring bags and equipment into school. At Whytrig we provide children with everything that they need for lessons and that equipment can remain in school, meaning that all children can focus on their learning and not have to worry about being not being prepared. Children should also bring a water bottle into school, so that they can stay hydrated each day; water bottles should have a sports top to avoid any spillages, which impact on lessons and exercise and text books. We will be arranging lockers for children in Year 6, 7 and 8 in the first week, given they have not been used in over a year. Our Year 5 children will be based separate to the main building in the new classrooms, so will keep their equipment and belongings with them there. Children are permitted to bring a phone to school, however they are their responsibility and children must ensure they are switched off before they enter the site and stored safely in their locker during the school day (year 5 children will hand their phones in to their form teacher who will store them safely in a locked cupboard in their classroom); phones should not be switched back on before children have left the site at the end of the school day. The school does not accept any responsibility for damage or loss of mobile phones.

Break/Lunchtimes

As the bubble system is no longer in operation, all children will have the full run of our yard space at break and lunchtimes as it will no longer be divided into separate year group sections. At lunchtimes, we will again use the main hall for those having school dinners and packed lunches to eat their lunch, unlike in the classrooms as we did last year in the restricted school setting. We will all work hard together as we look to learn, for some and re-establish, for others, these everyday school routines. The school snack trolley which used to be available at break times before the COVID disruptions will not operate immediately at the start of the term and we will inform parents and carers at a later date when this service will be up and running again.

Nut Allergies/Concerns

We must remind parents and carers that we have a number of children who have different allergies on the Elsdon Avenue site. Currently we are aware of several pupils who have nut allergies. People who suffer from nut allergies can develop a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. If someone has a nut allergy it is not just eating nuts that can cause a severe reaction, just being touched on the skin or smelling the breath of someone who has had nuts or a product containing nuts can trigger anaphylactic shock (which can cause breathing and swallowing difficulties). First aid staff in the school are trained to use the Epi-pens (an injection of adrenalin) which is required immediately if this happens. We therefore must not have nuts in school in any form. Please can we ask for your support in ensuring you do not include nut products in your child's packed lunch boxes brought into the school, or any treats brought in on special occasions. For example:

- Peanut butter sandwiches
- Chocolate spreads
- Cereal bars
- Some granola bars
- Cakes that contain nuts
- Biscuits / Cookies that contain nuts
- Peanut butter cakes
- Some Asian food, including satay
- Sauces that contain nuts

This list is not exhaustive, so please check the packaging of products closely. We appreciate that this is an additional thing to check but we know that you will recognise the importance of it. We are however aspiring to be a nut free school. We know if this was your child you would expect that we all help, especially as this can be a life-threatening condition.

Uniform

Could I also remind parents/carers that pupils are expected to return in September smartly dressed in the **correct school uniform**, so please ensure this occurs. In particular, could I reinforce that all students must wear formal black shoes as part of their uniform. Full details of our school uniform can be found on our website at <https://www.svf.org.uk/whytrig-middle-school/school-life/uniform>.

Parent Information Pack

This year we are sending an electronic copy of the revised school parent information pack to parents in new Years 6, 7 and 8 with this letter and we would kindly ask that parents read through the contents, especially around uniform expectations and the complete the return form online at <https://forms.gle/q1yiPzPcmcUbuzVr8>.

Extra Curricular Clubs/Activities

We will not be running any extra-curricular clubs initially at the start of term. We will write to parents and carers in the first week with the offer for the first half term, where we would like to encourage as many children as possible to get involved in a very important aspect of school life.

Pastoral Support

We know that the impact of the last eighteen months has been a difficult time for many of us, especially our pupils and recognise that we have many children who are still struggling with day to day routines. We also have our Year 5 children who are new to our school and haven't had their normal transition experience, as well as our new Year 6, who have never experienced Whytrig outside of their year group bubble. They may be anxious in the first week or two until they settle in. With this in mind, we will again be spending time in our initial weeks focusing on pupils' mental health and wellbeing by doing a variety of activities. Last year, we also had a mental health focus on the third Friday of every month; this year, we will continue that theme giving the third week of the half term to focus on our mental health and wellbeing. We would again like to signpost *Kooth* to you. This is a free service which has online counselling, chat forums, topical information etc for young people who may be experiencing any emotional worries or difficulties. You can visit the website at <https://www.kooth.com/>.

Parent meeting for new intake children

We were unfortunately unable to hold the parent meeting for new intake children in July when all transition week events were cancelled due to the COVID situation at the time. As a result, we would like to invite parents and carers of children in our new intake Year 5 and parents and carers of any other new children joining Whytrig in September in Years 6, 7 or 8 to a parent meeting in our main hall on Wednesday 8th September at 4pm. This will allow us to speak to you in person about the new academic year and new start for your child, as well as enabling you to put some faces to names and being able to meet the Year 5 form teachers in person. The meeting will last no more than one hour and we hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Finally, we hope that everyone enjoys the last fortnight of the holidays and returns to school suitably rested and raring to go on Tuesday 7th September. We look forward again to working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children over the course of the year and we thank you for your continued support. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Mr J K Souter

Head of School