



# WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

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**Executive Headteacher:** John Barnes

**Head of School:** Jonathan Souter

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Dear Parent or Carer

We have had a very positive start to the new academic year at Whytrig Middle School and it is really wonderful to again see the school full of children engaging in purposeful learning, despite the undoubtedly unusual situation we find ourselves in. We have been impressed with the way the children have adapted to the routines and procedures we have in place, which we will continue to review in school.

## **Avoiding Close Contact**

With cases of coronavirus rising within the north east, it is important we do all we can to keep the school community and other people safe. It is therefore important that all children avoid close contact at all times with others in school. Of course this can be a challenge, particularly with the younger children in freer situations such as break and lunchtime, when they can forget what they should be doing when they are caught up in the excitement of play! Staff will continue to reinforce the need to avoid close contact in school (and why we are doing this) and we would greatly appreciate your support in ensuring this is reinforced at home too. One of the main areas of concern is the potential mixing of bubbles (and families) outside of school in a morning. We would again like to remind parents of the staggered start and end times for all year groups each day. **Please ensure the children try to arrive on time and are not too early.** Start times are:

**Years 5 and 7 pupils should arrive at school at 8:35am** and line up (socially distant) in their form class to be collected by their form teacher at 8:40am. Staff will be there to supervise their entrance into school and handwashing before they enter their classrooms.

**Years 6 and 8 pupils should arrive at 8:45am** and line up (socially distant) in their form class to be collected by their form teacher at 8:50am. Staff will be there to supervise their entrance into school and handwashing before they enter their classrooms.

We are currently looking at other solutions to avoid congestion at the main gates, should the situation remain a concern.

## **COVID Symptoms**

If your child displays symptoms of COVID-19 you must not send them to school. The main symptoms of coronavirus are (see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/> for more information):

- **A high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- **A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
- **A loss of change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms. If you are unable to send your child to school because they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, you should inform school immediately by calling our reception.

## Google Classroom

In the last academic year, we introduced Google Classroom to facilitate learning at home during the lockdown period. It is a platform that allows staff to set work electronically so that it can be accessed at home. It is our intention to use the platform again this year as staff can schedule work to appear in a child's virtual classroom on a given date. We need our pupils to be ready to use Google Classroom in case there is a need to set work for remote learning again, however our main intention is to use it initially this year as a platform to set homework. Google classroom is a safe online environment as it is managed by our own network manager. Children log on with their own specific Seaton Valley Federation username, which is made from a prefix based on their year group, their initial and surname. Usernames follow the format below for our school:

Year 5:	<b>sv16jbloggs</b>
Year 6:	<b>sv15jbloggs</b>
Year 7:	<b>sv14jbloggs</b>
Year 8:	<b>sv13jbloggs</b>

We are sending out the user guide with this letter which will help new users to the platform get started (in particular our new Year 5 pupils) as well as reminding pupils how to log on in their ICT lessons. If your child has any problems with their logon or they have forgotten their password, please contact our school so we can help.

## Home School Agreements

As we have previously explained, we require all parents/carers to complete a home-school agreement for their child, which shares with you our expectations around behaviour at this time. We still have a small number of parents/carers who have not yet completed the agreement. Please read the agreement at the following web address <https://forms.gle/JtS975G5kpNyRmEG7> and then complete and submit the form with your child's name, class and your name if you have not already done so. Your support is greatly appreciated.

## Stationery

We have provided all children in school with a clear pencil case, pen, pencil, ruler, pencil sharpener, eraser, whiteboard pen, coloured pencils and whiteboard to use in their lessons, so that they have less items to bring to and from school (as well as ensuring they are always prepared for each lesson). Over the course of time we expect pens to run out and we have agreed that while school is operating in these conditions, we will replace them when this happens. However, we are not prepared to replace equipment that children lose (not that this should happen) or intentionally damage. In those circumstances, replacement equipment will need to be purchased in school at the cost price (eg 20p for a pen). Children should speak to their class teacher in the first instance if this happens who will arrange a replacement.

## Home School Planners

In order to re-establish one of our regular lines of communication with home, it is our intention to allow the children to take their home school planners home on a Friday evening at the end of the school day. This will allow parents/carers to see any notes that have been written in their child's diary, any demerit marks given, any merits earned and for the diaries to be signed. The children will then be expected to bring them back in to school on a Monday morning. Our staff will continue to phone home or use the school messaging service for daily/urgent communications.

## Accelerated Reader

We will soon be writing to you about our new Accelerated Reader scheme which we are going to be using in school this year as part of our approach to develop a love of reading in our young people. The children are currently taking their 'Star Tests' which will determine their starting points and the texts that they will be reading this term. We are very excited about this approach as it is a nationally-recognised scheme with proven outcomes.

Kind regards

Mr J K Souter

Head of School