



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 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. As you're likely aware, the government announced that schools should fully reopen from the start of the upcoming autumn term. They decided this on the basis of:

- The prevalence of coronavirus decreasing.
- The NHS test and trace system being in place.
- More clarity about the measures that need to be in place to create safe environments in schools.
- Time out of school being detrimental to children's development.
- The low risk to children of becoming severely ill from coronavirus.

As a school, we're really looking forward to welcoming all of our pupils back in September and we're working hard to make the school a safe, enjoyable environment. Safety is at the heart of all of our planning for everyone on our site. We have put in place a number of measures to facilitate this based on the current government guidelines, which we will continue to monitor and act upon as and when they are updated. They include staggered start and end times for the school day for different year groups, maintaining social distancing, arrangements for daily routines in school (including hygiene measures, use of toilets, break and lunchtimes etc) and how the curriculum will be delivered. We therefore ask that you please read this letter carefully, especially around the arrangements for the first week of term.

Monday 31st August

Bank Holiday

Tuesday 1st September

Teacher Training Day

Wednesday 2nd September

Year 5 Pupils Information

On Wednesday 2nd September we will welcome our new intake of Year 5 pupils for their first school day at Whytrig. Children should arrive at school at 8:35am, where they will be met by staff and taken into school for handwashing, 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. They will need to bring a packed lunch and a water bottle on this day. Everything else will be provided. School will end at 3:20pm 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 maintain social distancing outside of the school gates.

Wednesday 2nd September

Years 6, 7 and 8 Pupils Information

On Wednesday 2nd September all children in Years 6, 7 and 8 are invited to an individual interview appointment with their form teacher with one parent/carer. The appointment will be strictly a maximum of ten minutes, but should give parents/carers and pupils the opportunity to pass on any key information or ask questions following the prolonged period away from normal school.

We now use an intuitive online appointment booking system which allows you to choose your own appointment time with your allocated member of staff. Each student has been allocated to a member of staff, therefore you will only have one appointment to make. You will receive an email confirming your appointment details.

Appointments can be made on a first come first served basis, from noon on Wednesday 19th August and will close at 9:00am Tuesday 1st September 2020.

You can access the booking portal via the school gateway app or by browsing to whytrigmiddle.schoolcloud.co.uk to book your appointments. A short guide on how to add an appointment is included with this letter.

If you have not yet signed up for the school app, this would be an ideal time to do so. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the ASTLEY school office (01912371505) and staff can make appointments on your behalf.

All children in Years 6, 7 and 8 are expected to attend an appointment on this day.

Thursday 3rd September and beyond

From Thursday 3rd September, all pupils will be expected to attend school for full days, when timetabled lessons will commence.

There will be two different start and end times to the school day:

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. School will end at 3.20pm but Year 5 pupils will be escorted out of the school building slightly before this to ensure there is some control of pupils leaving school.

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. School will end at 3.30pm but Year 6 pupils will be escorted out of the school building slightly before this to ensure there is some control of pupils leaving school.

Children should aim to arrive in school just before their start time and line up on the yard in their form class line, where they will be met by their form teacher and taken into school. The new plans for school are based around 'bubbles' of year groups, in order to minimise contact between pupils in school, so it is important that children arrive at school on time and try not to mix with children from other year groups.

Lessons will run at the usual timetabled times with the first lesson of the day beginning at the normal time of 9:05am.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in September, as the government expects all pupils to attend school. The usual rules will apply, meaning we'll be recording attendance and following up on any absences. The government has made it very clear that all pupils are expected to attend school apart from those who are extremely clinically vulnerable and have been given a further shielding letter from a doctor.

Bubbles

In school, pupils will be based in year group 'bubbles' and taught mainly in their form class in the same classroom. The teachers will move to the children to teach their lessons, in order to minimise contact caused by movement around school. Children will only move classes to an English or Maths set but this room will be within the year group bubble. Classes will set up in tables of two, facing the front, with tables more spaced out than they usually would be.

Good personal hygiene habits are essential and the classrooms will be provided with tissues and anti-bacterial wipes to encourage this.

At this stage, most practical subjects such as music, art, science and technology will unfortunately not take place in their usual rooms, as we try to restrict movement around school. PE will be taught outdoors where possible (see Uniform).

Break/Lunchtimes

Morning break will be slightly extended to allow for different year groups to leave the building at staggered times and to sanitise their hands as they re-enter the building. Each year group will be assigned a specific area of the

yard for break and lunchtimes. There may inevitably be some contact with pupils from other bubbles as they move to break, but our intention is to limit this wherever possible, however this will be outdoors and closely monitored by duty staff, to make sure children remain as socially distant as possible.

Pupils will eat their lunch in their classroom at lunchtime, so as to avoid too many people in the dinner hall at any one time. They can bring in their own packed lunch or be taken to the hall to collect lunch to take back to their classroom. There will initially be a limited menu for school lunch to allow the kitchen staff to prepare the pre-orders effectively.

The rest of lunchtime will be spent outside in their designated area. On wet weather days, the children will stay in their classroom base for break and lunchtime.

The Curriculum and Timetable

We intend our curriculum and timetable to run as normal from September. All National Curriculum lessons will be taught by subject specialist teachers, as they would normally be, but there will be some changes to the way in which the pupils work, for example no group tasks or collaborative work and less movement in the classroom. We will also be trying to ascertain where pupils are at in terms of their learning. We know that pupils have faced differing situations and challenges through the lockdown period and as a result have made different rates of progress. Staff will be assessing pupils once we return to school, to identify gaps in pupils' skills/ knowledge. The child/parent/form teacher meeting on Wednesday 2nd September will also feed into this, which is why it is important for attendance at those meetings. Interventions will be put in place for children who need it.

Uniform

From September, we will expect all aspects of our uniform policy to be followed again. This includes wearing the appropriate footwear and complying with other rules around jewellery, hair and makeup. We would really appreciate your assistance in helping us to re-establish the standards that we expect in terms of uniform. Pupils should attend school in their school PE kit on days where they have a timetabled PE lesson as they will be unable to use the PE changing facilities on site until further notice. (this should include jogging bottoms, but not leggings).

Equipment/Phones

We are asking that, in the first few weeks of the new term, **no equipment is brought into school (eg bags, pencil cases, stationery etc), other than a water bottle and a packed lunch** if they need one. Pupils will be provided with everything for lessons that they need and that equipment will remain in school. This is to reduce the risk of spreading the virus between home and school. We allow children to have a mobile phone in case they are needed before or after school, but they must not be used anywhere on the school grounds. If your child does need to bring a phone into school it is their responsibility and they must ensure it is switched off before they enter the site and stored safely in their locker during the school day. The school does not accept any responsibility for damage or loss of mobile phones.

Behaviour

We do not expect to have any issues around pupil behaviour, however, it is more important than ever, for the safety of everyone, that our pupils adhere to the school rules. As part of this letter, we are requiring parents/carers to complete a home-school agreement for their child, which shares with you our expectations around behaviour at this time and to ask for your support. Please go to <https://forms.gle/JtS975G5kpNyRmEG7> and read the document carefully, then complete and submit the form with your child's name, class and your name.

Extra Curricular Clubs/Activities

We will not be running any extra-curricular clubs initially in the new term, but as the weeks unfold, we will review this to see if there are activities we can offer. We will send out more information regarding this if and when it is relevant.

Pastoral Support

We're aware that the lockdown has been a difficult time for many of us, especially our pupils and recognise that we have many children who have not been in a formal classroom setting since March, and by the time September arrives, this will be half a year out of formal education. We also have our Year 5 children who are new to our school and haven't had their normal transition experience. They may be anxious in the first week or two until they settle in. With this in mind, we will be spending time in our initial weeks focusing on pupils' mental health and wellbeing by doing a variety of activities. We would also 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/>. Please let us know if you think your child might need extra support when returning to school, such as if they feel anxious about coming back or they're experiencing bereavement. It is helpful for us to know about any pupils

who have experienced the loss of a family member during this crisis period, particularly as a result of COVID19, so that we can best support them on their return. You can contact school and ask for our School Support Officer to do this. We can assure you that the sharing of any such information will be handled with sensitivity and the confidentiality it requires.

Our hope for September is to get Whytrig Middle School back to normal as quickly as we can, without compromising safety. We will be fully committed to helping all pupils catch up and reach their potential in the coming year. In the meantime, enjoy the remainder of the summer break and we look forward to seeing everyone on Wednesday 2nd September.

Kind regards,

Mr J K Souter

Head of School