



WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

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Executive Headteacher: John Barnes

Head of School: Jonathan Souter

2 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to share the details of our plan to return to school on Monday 8th March 2021. The government announced last week that schools should fully reopen from this date and we're really looking forward to welcoming all of our pupils back at Whytrig. In many ways, your child's experience of school will be very similar to the autumn term, with staggered starts and ends of the school day, the use of designated entrances for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils, a continued focus on measures in place throughout school to minimise any potential spread of the virus (such as the use of the year group 'bubble' system, extra hygiene measures, the use of toilets, break and lunchtime routines etc) and including the need for our pupils to do all they can to maintain social distancing from other wherever possible. This should help to alleviate any anxieties they may have around the return, safe in the knowledge that they successfully attended school up to Christmas with these measures in place. We therefore ask that you please read this letter carefully, especially around the arrangements for the remainder of this term

New arrangements from Monday 8th March

You will already have read in Mr Barnes' letter on Friday that there are two significant changes for your child's return to school this time around. The first is that **pupils in Years 7 and 8 will be wearing face masks in school at all times** (apart from during PE lessons and when they are outside at least 2m away from each other). Initially this will be for the remaining three weeks of term up to the Easter break. We will however, continue to monitor the advice from the government and Public Health England on this issue and will respond to changes if they occur. If you feel that your child is unable to wear a face mask in school, then we ask that you provide further evidence to support your request given the new advice provided to schools.

The second is that **Covid Lateral Flow Testing** will take place for pupils in Years 7 and 8 (and staff). We have already successfully undertaken this process since our return in January with pupils in our Key Worker/Vulnerable provision and are now prepared for the roll out of tests to all of the pupils in Years 7 and 8. Covid Lateral Flow Tests will take place three times for pupils on the following days and times:

Thursday 4th March - Year 7 testing (am)

Pupils are to arrive at the school sports hall (left door) for their Covid test at the following times and then return home afterwards.

Time Slot	Group
9:00 - 9:45	Year 7 surnames A to C (inclusive)
9:45 - 10:30	Year 7 surnames D to G (inclusive)
10:30 - 11:15	Year 7 surnames H to O (inclusive)
11:15 - 12:00	Year 7 surnames P to Z (inclusive)

Thursday 4th March - Year 8 testing (pm)

Pupils are to arrive at the school sports hall (left door) for their Covid test at the following times and then return home afterwards.

Time Slot	Group
1:30 - 2:15	Year 8 surnames A to J (inclusive)
2:15 - 3:00	Year 8 surnames K to Z (inclusive)

Monday 8th March - Year 7 testing (am) during school day.

Tuesday 9th March - Year 8 testing (am) during school day.

Thursday 11th March - Year 7 testing (am) during school day.

Friday 12th March - Year 8 testing (am) during school day.

Monday 15th March – catch-up testing (pm) during school day.

Monday 8th March and beyond

From Monday 8th March, all pupils will be expected to attend school for full days, when normal timetabled lessons will commence. There will be two different start and end times to the school day which will be the same as the ones we operated in the Autumn Term:

Years 5 and 7 pupils should arrive at school for (and no sooner than) 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 school for (and no sooner than) 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. **Pupils in Years 7 and 8 will again enter the school site from the gate access at the far end of our yard on the corner of Whitfield Road and Swinburn Road.** This will continue to help to further prevent any congestion at the main gate and mixing of bubbles and will allow each year group to enter straight into their allocated area of the yard. Children in Years 7 and 8 are reminded that because their entrance to school is along a residential street, their behaviour and conduct should be appropriate at all times. This gate will be locked at 8.55am. If a child in Year 7 or 8 arrives after this time, they should enter the site through the main gate and reception, where late registrations can be taken if appropriate. This routine will continue to remain in place until further notice.

Children must 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. As the plans for school are still based around 'bubbles' of year groups, in order to minimise contact between pupils in school, it is important that children arrive at school on time and try not to mix with children from other year groups. Lessons will then run at the usual timetabled times with the first lesson of the day beginning at the normal time of 9:05am.

Form Class 7L

On 9th December we wrote to parents and carers of children in 7L to inform them that their teaching room would be changing to Room B9, as it is a more suitable teaching room and to allow the further use of the Food Technology Room across the school. From Monday 8th March this new arrangement will commence. Children should still arrive in school as per the arrangements detailed already and systems will be established to ensure their safe movement around school.

Attendance

Attendance is once again mandatory, 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 clinically extremely vulnerable and have been given a further shielding letter from a doctor.

Bubbles

In school, pupils will again be based in year group 'bubbles' as they were in the Autumn Term 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, hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes to encourage this. We will be continuing with the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' policy in order to minimise the potential to spread germs.

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

Break/Lunchtimes

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 pick up a pre-ordered lunch to take back to their classroom. There will continue to 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

Our curriculum and timetable will again run as normal from 8th March, as it did in the autumn term. All National Curriculum lessons will be taught by subject specialist teachers, as they would normally be, but will be continuing from the autumn term in 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. Despite the lockdown period being shorter than the one last year, we know that pupils have faced differing situations and challenges through the lockdown period and as a result have again made different rates of progress. Staff will be assessing pupils once we return to school, to identify gaps in pupils' skills/ knowledge.

Uniform

From Monday 8th March, 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 must include jogging bottoms - but not leggings). Pupils should also attend school wearing the correct footwear. **Children should not wear trainers for school unless it is a PE day.** We appreciate there may have been some issues replacing footwear during the lockdown and closure of non-essential retailers and our approach over the remainder of this term will reflect that.

Equipment/Phones

We still have the expectation that no equipment is brought into school, other than a water bottle and a packed lunch (if your child needs one). Whilst we appreciate that this is not an ideal situation, we believe this measure reduces the risk of transmission of germs. 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 kept safely on their person. 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 all, that pupils adhere to the school rules. Form teachers will spend time in the first hour on Monday 8th going over routines and expectations, in the same way that we would at the start of a new academic year after an extended break. We would appreciate your help in supporting school as we re-establish boundaries and routines in order to ensure the school environment can be the best that it can be for children and staff and that good learning can take place.

Extra Curricular Clubs/Activities

We will not be running any extra-curricular clubs initially in the short 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 December, and by the time Monday arrives, this will be eleven weeks since they were last in school. We understand that many of our children may again be anxious in the first week or two until they settle back in. With this in mind, we will again be spending time focusing on pupils' mental health and wellbeing by doing a variety of activities. This academic year we have already established the third Friday of every half term as a day when we have a specific mental health focus in school. Friday 12th March will be our mental health day in this half term which conveniently falls at the end of our first week back and we will be thinking about the impact of lockdown on us all. It would again be helpful for staff to know about any significant changes that have occurred during lockdown that may impact on your child's time in school. Can I please remind parents and carers about a resource we shared in the autumn term - Kooth 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 do not hesitate to contact school if you need to speak to a member of staff so we can ensure your child is best supported in school.

Our continued hope is to get Whytrig Middle School back to normal as quickly as we can, without compromising safety. We will once again be working hard together to help all pupils catch up and reach their potential in the remaining weeks of the term and the final term of the year. We really are looking forward to seeing everyone back in school on Monday!

Kind regards,

Mr J K Souter

Head of School