



2nd September 2020

Dear parents,

Response to questions and issues raised regarding September plans

A huge thank to you all for the positive responses via email, telephone and social media following an incredibly intense few weeks to ensure we have all bases covered to enjoy a fruitful return to school, given the restrictions we are working under.

As promised, the plans were fully scrutinised by all our staff yesterday and again today across our three secondary schools (Burscough Priory Academy, Tarleton Academy and Wellfield High School) and questions the staff raised were added to the enquiries we had received from parents.

These were then thoroughly discussed with our senior leaders from the Trust and the schools, along with representatives from our Trustees and Governors and our legal team.

Across our three schools (with a total of 1875 students) we received 21 queries from parents. Below is an outline of the main issues raised, with our responses outlined.

Some parents were simply raising issues particular to their child, and they will be contacted separately.

Masks in classrooms

Of the responses we received, only three were unequivocally objecting to the use of masks in lessons.

As such we have decided to proceed with our requirement for students to wear face masks in lessons.

We are aware that Government guidelines have only suggested face coverings in communal areas. We have decided this will be optional whilst we are not in a local restricted area. This is because all movement around school will be in one direction only (nobody passing in another direction), in single file and accompanied by an adult. Likewise, breaks and lunches will be in year group bubbles with newly cleaned surfaces between use (e.g. the dining area).

We are aware that Government guidelines do not currently require the use of face coverings in lessons. This is because they are concerned about the impact on learning.

Both of these options have been left to the discretion of school leaders in the latest DfE guidance.

It is our view that our students behave extremely well and respond well to basic instructions. As such we will have the following actions and strategies in place to encourage safer use of masks:

- All students will receive an initial tutorial on the benefits of face coverings in enclosed areas and the safe wearing and removal of masks.
- At the end of each lesson, students will be guided to safely remove their masks (based on World Health Organisation guidelines) and they will be stored safely
- Students who wish to keep their masks on during unstructured times can choose to do so
- Hands will be sanitised as they leave the classroom having handled their masks
- On the return to the classroom, hands will be sanitised on entry
- Once students are seated, teachers will guide students on the safe re-application of masks, stressing the need to handle using ear loops only

- Teachers will wear visors so that their face can be seen when teaching
- Students will not be required to wear masks in practical PE lessons as these will usually be outside
- Any student with a valid exemption will be added to a list to be shared with all teaching staff and will be marked on seating plans
- Parents should notify school if they feel they have good reasons for their child to be placed on the exemption list

Ultimately, we have been overwhelmed by the positive support from our families who recognise that staff and students will feel anxious in an enclosed space without face coverings and this has been the driver for our decision.

For those parents who wish to know more about some of the sources we have used to inform our thinking, please see the diagram below, with the link to the source document.

Type and level of group activity	Low occupancy			High occupancy		
	Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated	Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Wearing face coverings, contact for short time						
Silent	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Speaking	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Shouting, singing	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Wearing face coverings, contact for prolonged time						
Silent	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	* Low	Medium	* Medium	Medium	High
Shouting, singing	Low	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
No face coverings, contact for short time						
Silent	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High
No face coverings, contact for prolonged time						
Silent	Low	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Speaking	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	High	High	High	High	High

Risk of transmission
 Low ■ Medium ■ High ■

* Borderline case that is highly dependent on quantitative definitions of distancing, number of individuals, and time of exposure

<https://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/370/bmj.m3223/F3.large.jpg?download=true>

In addition:

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/all-topics-z/coronavirus/threats-and-outbreaks/covid-19/facts/q-covid-19/q-covid-19-children-aged-0>

Can they wear their own masks?

Two washable, reusable masks are available in school per student if needed.

If students prefer to wear their own masks this is no problem, although we would discourage disposable masks due to environmental concerns.

Two parents have requested a variation on the requirement that the masks are 'plain', and we are happy to support patterned masks, as long as these are appropriate for school.

Will masks inhibit learning?

Some parents have raised concerns about how students will be able to engage in the lesson, develop relationships (particularly our new Year 7) and feel comfortable enough to concentrate. Although it will not be ideal, having made the decision to proceed we have agreed the following actions and strategies to ensure students receive a full learning experience and enjoy positive relationships in the classroom:

- Teachers will use static seating plans (which will be tweaked as we go along to get the best arrangements) so that we know who our students are and what their needs may be
- We will continue to encourage students to carry, use and refill water bottles for use in and out of the classroom to ensure they remain hydrated
- If students need a quick break from their mask, this will be allowed for a short period
- Conversations and question/answer will be encouraged and quietly managed with careful, quiet listening used as a strategy
- Teachers will be actively encouraging other ways for students to engage in learning e.g. through use of individually allocated whiteboards and other forms of non-verbal communication. These have been discussed at length on our training days
- Additional pastoral staff have been recruited if any students feel anxious and need 'time out', which will be discretely handled

Below is a summary of the main points of the other questions asked and our responses:

Can siblings mix during unstructured times given they mix at home?	Not possible due to staggered breaks and lunches. Parents to notify if concerns re integration in their own year group.
What safeguards are there for students allocated rooms with stools only (e.g. science labs) for back support?	This has only happened in two schools with year 10. Year 10 will move around for their options and won't be in this room all day. Students with back issues should report this to their PBM and alternative seating will be sourced.
Will desks be spaced out/socially distant in classrooms?	As far as possible, but this is very limited with space. Desks will be in rows and students will mostly be sitting two to a desk. This is the same in most schools and in line with guidance.
If someone in a year group tests positive and my child has to self-isolate due to proximity to this student, will my other children also need to self-isolate?	No, not unless your child(ren) shows symptoms
How will my child access learning if they are self-isolating at home?	We are very aware that students may be self-isolating for a number of reasons, hence we are delivering our remote/home learning curriculum daily through ClassCharts, in line with what is being delivered in the classroom.
What if another member of the household has any Covid symptoms?	The whole family should self-isolated get tested asap to enable the household to come out of self-isolation if the test is negative. If it is positive, test and trace will issue individual guidelines.
Will students be supervised at the central meeting point whilst waiting for their next teacher?	Yes, by senior leaders and pastoral staff
Can you confirm children will not be tested for Covid in school?	We will not be carrying out any testing of students in school
What happens during exceptionally bad weather?	Students will be supervised in classrooms for breaks For lesson changeovers, students will be encouraged to bring coats/umbrellas
What are the rules on coats?	Students should remove coats on entry to buildings because they are outside wear and not part of the uniform. They should be placed in bags or on the back of chairs in classrooms

What is the procedure for using toilets?	At breaks, use the designated toilets for their year groups which staff will, supervise to ensure correct numbers at any one time. During lessons, staff will use their professional discretion as is currently the case, with a note on the system to log.
When will hand sanitisers be used and will handwashing be scheduled?	Hand sanitisers will be supervised by teachers on exit and entry to classrooms. Handwashing will be expected after toilet use but will not be scheduled at other times.
Where will students eat their lunch?	Packed lunches and grab bag deliveries will be eaten in the dining halls, staggered between year groups, with tables/chairs cleaned between use
Some year groups will not be eating lunch until 1.40pm. This is unreasonable.	For each year group to have enough time to eat their lunches separately this has to be staggered and, for older year groups, will be quite late. Students are encouraged to bring adequate snacks to have during morning break if this is a challenge for them. We will be making snacks available at other times.
Can students eat part of their lunch at break time?	Yes, but only if they bring their own lunch. Grab bags will not be delivered until the designated time.
Where can parents safely drop off and pick up each day?	Drop off and pick up should be at a safe distance from school. This cannot be on the school site for safeguarding reasons. Parents should agree a suitable pick up point further down from school which does not add to traffic congestion.
How will the new tutor groups be compiled and what if they are not with a teacher or other students that they know?	These have been carefully constructed with all the information available to us and we completely appreciate that this may cause anxiety for some. Inevitably some students will have a new member of staff as their tutor. They will have time in their tutor groups to integrate and get to know each other and we are mindful of the need to carefully support this.
Why can't children come in in their PE kits like other schools and keep them on for the day?	For our students this could potentially be 3 (Key Stage 3) to 5 (GCSE PE) days out of 5 per week, which would mean more days in PE kit than in uniform. Some students would feel very uncomfortable wearing PE kit all day. The PE curriculum has been altered to accommodate students doing practical lessons in uniform plus trainers.
What is being done about children of parents who are in the high-risk groups?	Government guidance is clear, that they should come into school and follow all measures as recommended.
What are the contingencies for those students unable to return to school?	All lesson resources will be available remotely.
What about students who are very anxious about returning?	Parents should let us know so we can arrange pastoral support.
PE lessons are vital, and consideration of PE kit should be given?	A whole new PE curriculum will be considered to address the Health & Safety measures, which will be enriching, just in a slightly different way. There will be no reduction of time given to PE, which is already above the national average in our schools. PE kit is not practical given the higher frequency of lessons.
Will Year 9 have access to specialist rooms for their options?	This will happen where possible
Concern that there is only one toilet for Yr 10 girls	We will manage this carefully, but we needed separate toilets for different year groups and were unable to acquire portaloos although we tried and will continue to try and source.
Why are there more students that just Yr 7 & 11 on the first day?	We were concerned about delaying return after such a long break.

	We knew Yr 7 would need a little more space and we are very mindful of that but other year groups are very disappointed about the further delay, so we wanted to get the balance right.
What can be done about students mixing out of school, particularly coming to and from school?	All we can do is encourage students not to do this and explain the risks involved. We do appreciate that beyond this, all we can do is mitigate in school for the things we can affect.
Do children need to be kept at home if they only have a cough?	Yes, along with the rest of the household and to be tested asap to clarify it is just a cough/cold and not Covid. They are not to return until test results come back negative.
Are you able to do anything about crowded buses?	Unfortunately, no additional capacity is available or provided by the LA. Students should wear masks and be aware of who they are sitting near if track and trace is instigated. School has lists of who have travelled on each bus.
Issued toilet pass - will they still have it?	Yes, toilet pass will be reissued on medical guidance
How many toilets per year group are available?	As per the plans shared. We have tried to source additional toilet capacity but are unable to.
Water bottles in class	Students are allowed water bottles in lessons and can remove their masks to drink their water.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding.

Mrs L A Gwinnett (Executive Head) and all our staff.

Outstanding education at the heart of the community

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