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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that our students are enjoying their summer break and beginning to look forward to the start of a new academic year. I just wanted in advance of September to provide you with an overview of our school arrangements for the start of term. Although we will go through all of the arrangements in detail with students on their return, any chance you get to go through them with your child before then would be much appreciated.

Please note that our plans are based on the latest version of the Department for Education's guidance for schools, [Schools COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance). Should we receive any further guidance which prompts us to amend any of our plans, for example from the Local Authority's Public Health Team, then we will update parents accordingly.

Overview

Now that the country has reached Step 4 in the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Department for Education's guidance for schools is significantly different to previous versions. Whereas schools have previously been asked to 'balance' educational provision with management of virus transmission, it now states that "Our priority is for you to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils".

Although we could fully return to operating in a way which we used to think of as 'normal', our plans below take a more measured approach for the following reasons:

- It is much easier to take a cautious approach at first and then make further changes with confidence than to loosen too many restrictions straightaway and have to reinstate them for any reason.
- Covid is still prevalent in society, especially amongst young people, and hence it only seems right at this stage that as a school we do what we can to minimise transmission through our arrangements wherever it is possible and appropriate to do so.
- Everybody, either consciously or sub-consciously, is currently transitioning themselves back towards 'normality'. There are lots of reasons why different people will be at different stages in this journey and hence our plans are designed to allow students and families to continue that process in the new school year without being put in situations which could cause discomfort or even distress.

In general, we are making more changes within classrooms than in the wider school. The classroom changes will allow for creation of the best possible learning environment, whilst restrictions in place around school will continue to limit the number and nature of contacts between students.

I fully appreciate that some parents will feel that we should have moved further towards 'normality'; others will feel we have moved too far too quickly. Hopefully a balance has been struck which allows us to operate as effectively as possible whilst still acknowledging that we are in a pandemic which requires management, with proposals that put us in a position where we can quickly respond and adjust to changing circumstances as the term progresses.

Staggered Start to the Term

A reminder of the start dates for each year group to enable students to be tested on-site during the course of their first day back in school:

Years 7 and 11: Thursday 2nd September (Week 1)

Years 10, 12 and 13: Friday 3rd September (Week 1)

Years 8 and 9: Monday 6th September (Week 2)

Sixth Form Enrolment

This will take place in school from 11am to 12pm on 1st September, with former Year 11 tutor groups invited into school at the following times:

11.00am: 11AJA and 11CWH

11.15am: 11KFO and 11KWR

11.30am: 11NTU and 11RCL

11.45am: 11SCO and 11SJA

Further details have been sent directly to last year's Year 11 students by Mrs Lindop, Director of Sixth Form.

Student Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

Separate details have been provided by Mrs Warburton, Deputy Headteacher, regarding the two on-site LFD tests for students at the start of term. These will take place on the following days:

Years 7 and 11: Thursday 2nd and Tuesday 7th September

Years 10, 12 and 13: Friday 3rd and Wednesday 8th September

Years 8 and 9: Monday 6th and Thursday 9th September

From Monday 13th until at least the end of September, when the government intends to review their use, students should continue to take LFD tests at home twice a week on Monday and Friday mornings.

Whole-School Arrangements

- **Face-Coverings:** These do not need to be worn inside the school building, although students who wish to wear a face-covering may do so. The wearing of face-coverings by students on school transport is still recommended.
- **One-Way System:** This will continue to operate in September.
- **Break/Lunch Arrangements:** For now, the 'split' break/lunch arrangement will continue in order to avoid the very large numbers of students who would otherwise gather together in the Dining Area. Please note that Year 13 will use the e-Café in September - with Year 12 using the left-hand side of the Dining Area (viewed as you walk in), this facilitates the provision of 'grab and go' food in the following areas at the start of term:
Early Break/Lunch: Year 7 in the Dining Area (right-hand side); Year 8 in the Break-Out Space
Later Break/Lunch: Years 9 and 10 in the Break-Out Space; Year 11 in the Dining Area (right-hand side)
- **Wet Weather Arrangements:** For now, in order to continue avoiding having very large gatherings of students inside school, in the event of weather which prevents them being outside students will continue to use their Period 2 or 4 classroom.

- **Start of Day Arrangements:** In the first instance students will line up outside school at the start of day and be brought into school by their tutor. Year 7 students will line up nearest to the Bus Park.
- **Cleaning Around School:** Our enhanced cleaning programme will continue to be in operation, with regularly-touched surfaces cleaned throughout the school day.

Classroom Arrangements

- **Hand-sanitisers:** These will remain in use and students should sanitise their hands on entry at the start of each lesson.
- **Table-Cleaning:** With the focus on taking personal responsibility by sanitising hands on entry, the cleaning of tables between each lesson will no longer be required.
- **Teacher Movement:** It is no longer required for teachers to keep a 2m distance from students, enabling them to circulate around classrooms as appropriate.
- **Desk Arrangements:** Desks will be arranged to generate the most effective learning environment. They are no longer required to all be in forward-facing rows.
- **Seating Plans:** Keeping fixed seating plans in classrooms for the purpose of possible 'track-and-trace' use is no longer required.
- **Providing Written Feedback:** Staff will collect assignments and written work in whatever way is most applicable for their subject, with previous restrictions in this area no longer required.
- **Classroom Ventilation:** This remains one of the most important control measures in the government's guidance for schools. Windows will be open as much as possible and classroom doors kept open wherever possible. In the event of colder weather, doors and then windows will be closed if necessary (rather than students putting coats or non-school jumpers on).
- **PE Changing Rooms:** These will revert to full, 'normal' use in September.

In the Longer Term

- **Assemblies:** Whilst the on-site testing is taking place, which will start at 8.45 each day, there will be no assemblies initially at the start of term. There will be a phased re-introduction of assemblies, with half-year assemblies taking place in the first instance whilst we transition back to 'normal' practice.
- **Extra-Curricular Provision:** Curriculum provision such as revision classes or intervention sessions can begin immediately in September. 'Enrichment' activities such as music, sport or other 'clubs' will not begin immediately for the first couple of weeks whilst we finalise plans to co-ordinate and 're-launch' our offer in this area. Full details to follow on this in September.
- **Open Evening:** At present our plan is to hold this event over two evenings to manage the numbers of people in the school building at any one time. Parents of children in each of our primary schools will be invited to one of the scheduled evenings on **Tuesday 28th or Thursday 30th September.**

Managing Covid in the School Community

A summary of the current position for students/parents:

- No child suffering from any of the main Covid symptoms (high temperature, persistent cough, loss/change of smell or taste) should attend school. Arrangements will be made for any child developing any of these symptoms during the school day to go home immediately.
- A PCR test should be arranged for any child developing any of the main Covid symptoms and they should self-isolate whilst the result of the PCR test is awaited.

- A PCR test should be arranged for any child who receives a positive LFD test result and they should self-isolate whilst the result of the PCR test is awaited.
- Any child who receives a positive PCR test result should self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the onset of symptoms (if symptomatic) or the PCR test (if asymptomatic).
- Please note that other household members do not need to self-isolate in any of the above circumstances if they are fully vaccinated or under 18 years, 6 months old.
- In the event of a positive student Covid case, schools will no longer identify and get in touch with the families of 'close contacts'. Instead the student will be contacted by NHS Track and Trace and asked to identify close contacts.
- No student who is identified as a close contact, either by living or coming into contact with somebody who tests positive is required to self-isolate. They will be advised by NHS Track and Trace to take a PCR test, but do not need to self-isolate whilst the result of the PCR test is awaited.
- Please note that we will continue to set remote learning for students who are self-isolating at home as a result of testing positive for Covid. At the very least this will involve provision of lesson resources on Microsoft Teams. Staff will try to involve these students in 'live' lessons wherever possible, although thank you again for your understanding that this is not always easy to do when only one or two students are absent from a lesson.

Vaccinations

There is a chance for anyone over 16 to get their vaccine before returning to school in September. On Sunday 29th August at the Frodsham Festival in the Park (next to the main stage in Castle Park, Frodsham), a vaccination clinic will be open from 10am to 5pm.

I fully appreciate that the above is an enormous amount of information to take in at the start of the school year, especially for families of new Year 7 students who are not as aware of how we have been operating in recent months (and to whom we offer the warmest of welcomes at this time). Hence please do not hesitate to get in touch about any of the above or any other aspect of school life at any stage if necessary.

Until the start of term, contactportal@helsbyhigh.org is the best way of getting in touch and once term starts, the most appropriate contact is usually the relevant pastoral team via the following:

- Year7admin@helsbyhgh.org
- Year8admin@helsbyhigh.org
- Year9admin@helsbyhigh.org
- Year10admin@helsbyhigh.org
- Year11admin@helsbyhigh.org
- 6thformadmin@helsbyhigh.org

Also available are admin@helsbyhigh.org for general administrative enquiries and head@helsbyhigh.org to contact myself directly.

I hope that all of our students and their families enjoy the final days of the summer break. Please do pass on to our students how much we are looking forward to seeing them back in school at the start of the new school year.

Best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher