



16 July 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

I hope this letter finds you well as we come to the end of an academic year like no other. We are delighted that a fair degree of normality is set to return in September in that we are able to welcome back all pupils across all year groups, and very much look forward to seeing your son or daughter then.

Arrangements for September

The first annex to this letter provides you with key details about what the full return in September will look like from a safety and logistical standpoint, in light of the Government's guidance to schools on full opening. Mr Watters has prepared a child-friendly version of the arrangements which he will send to you separately for sharing with your son or daughter.

Start days for the different year groups are:

Wednesday 2 September: **Year 5** in school

Thursday 3 September: **All other year** groups, along with year 5

I shall write to you again towards the end of August with more details of these days, specific timings and of the safety measures that will be in place, including arrangements for those getting school transport.

Attendance in September

The Government is clear that it expects all pupils to return to school unless individuals are complying with clinical and/or public health advice or another statutory reason applies. For parents and carers of children able to come to school but who are anxious about this, please do get in touch via admin@hexhammiddle.org.uk in the last week of the holidays so we can talk through your concerns. The full details of the Government's guidance around attendance, including for those shielding or self-isolating, are contained in Annex 2 to this letter.

Summer holiday expectations

We know that most of our pupils have been working really well over the past few months. It is important that they take a break over the summer and, within the limits of the guidance on social distancing and hygiene, can take appropriate advantage of the easing of lockdown restrictions. We would also like each child to keep up their reading skills by reading lots throughout the six weeks.

As mentioned, I shall write to you again towards the end of August. In the meantime, I hope all is well with you and your loved ones and I wish you and them an enjoyable and safe summer.

Yours faithfully

Graeme Atkins
Executive Headteacher

ANNEX 1

Hexham Middle School

September 2020 Full Opening

Key features

We will:

- Have all pupils back
- Operate our full timetable ensuring all pupils get full teaching time (we may prioritise maths and English in the first few weeks to get pupils back on track in these subjects)
- Adhere to the Government [guidance](#), complying with the seven elements of the [system of controls](#)
- Manage pupils in year group bubbles in accordance with the guidance
- Make changes to arrival times and mustering points to ensure bubbles are separate but without adverse impact on those using school transport
- Direct pupils to use specific routes and entry/exit points to avoid congestion and mixing
- Stagger departure times but without adverse impact on those using school transport (see timetable of school day)
- Adjust classroom layouts where necessary to align with the guidance on seating arrangements
- Provide additional cleaning in accordance with the guidance
- Provide additional handwashing facilities at key entry points
- Ensure that pupil hand cleaning occurs via sanitisers in every classroom and at other key points
- Enable year 5 to have most of their lessons in the Orchard building to reduce movement around the site (this will be reviewed as the situation develops)
- Enable movement in other year groups to be limited, where possible, but pupils will move between classrooms and buildings.

Week one

Pupils will spend their first few days with their new form tutor as part of a focus on wellbeing and re-establishing routine.

- Tuesday 1 September: INSET Day
- Wednesday 2 September: Year 5 attend
- Thursday 3/Friday 4 September: All pupils attend

Week two

- Year 5: will spend their week in Orchard largely with their form tutor. Maths and English will be taught in mixed-ability classes.
- Years 6, 7 and 8: will operate their normal timetable for periods 1, 2 and 3 and the afternoons of that first full week working on personal, social and health education with form tutors. Form class/well-being activities will be well-planned in advance to ensure that there is a consistent, impactful approach across the school. We think there will be a need for such provision in this early phase and it also enables us to limit the amount of movement around site while we get everyone adjusting to the new arrangements.

Week three

- The intention is to operate the new timetable in its entirety from this point with the contents of this document implemented.
- Pupils will be taught in English and maths sets in Year 5 from week three (within their bubble).

Structure of typical day

- 8.40: Year 7 arrive to top yard; Year 8 arrive to Beaumont yard (extended morning form time/possible assembly slot)
- 8.50: Year 5 arrive to their yard; Year 6 arrive to their yard
- Break time will remain at 11.00. Year 7 and 8 should be walked to break at around 10.55 to ensure they have moved in advance of the bell. Year 5 and 6 will leave lesson 2 at 11.00
- Year 7 and 8 will re-enter the buildings at 11.15 with Year 5 and 6 following once KS3 have moved at 11.15. Staff can communicate and use judgement on the movement time
- Lunch will be 12.15 to 1.10. The year group on first sitting will leave period 3 at prompt 12.05 and be walked to the canteen (until we establish the time taken)
- 3.20: Years 7 and 8 leave
- 3.30: Years 5 and 6 leave
- Pupils travelling on buses can arrive together and make their way to the designated year group yard. They can leave their final lesson and wait to depart on their bus.

Lunch arrangements

- Supervising staff will walk each year group controlled by radio communication to ensure that the canteen can be cleaned down between bubbles. Duty staff will walk the year group back to their social space.
- Each year group will have their own yard.
- On field days, each field will be split into two year group zones with 'footpaths' around the outside to avoid crossing.
- We will also consider a rota between the field and yard to encourage more activity during break times (as we have noticed during this period).
- Lunch will be served in the canteen one year group at a time with cleaning in between. More detail to follow.

Curriculum

- An additional English and maths lesson will be included in every year group for the first half term (pending a review). As per the guidance, a strong emphasis must be placed on the core skills of reading, writing and numeracy. These lessons will take the place of both design and food technology (as these have their own difficulties in terms of suitable seating and spacing) and RE – this will be for the first half term only. Additional lessons will be pre-planned with teachers stepping in to deliver where necessary (for a short term).
- Across the curriculum, an emphasis on the teaching of reading, writing and, where possible, maths will be in place (an extension of the current LITAC and NUMAC approaches).
- Curriculum Leaders will guide staff on the assessment of pupils and how we plan to bridge gaps in learning over time. A more comprehensive plan on the curriculum will follow in due course.
- There will be an emphasis on re-establishing high standards of presentation and handwriting in September and beyond. The pen license scheme in year 5 will commence as well as assemblies, rewards, additional practice time and competitions.

ANNEX 2

Excerpt from Department for Education [guidance](#) on full opening of schools

ATTENDANCE

Attendance expectations

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity (as set out in the section below).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This

may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).