

# UPDATED - Frequently Asked Questions – Parents and Carers

Q. What precautions is the school taking to minimise any risk from Covid-19.

A. The school is following the Government guidance. Please see the letter from Mr Watson, dated 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020 for further details. The letter was emailed to parents and carers on the 14<sup>th</sup> July but can also be found in the Transition Key Information area under 'Letters sent home'.

Q. Will my child be starting at St Thomas More on Wednesday 2nd as previously published?

A. No, Year 7's are expected to start at STM on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September.**

Q. What equipment will my child need for school?

A. To minimise sharing of equipment, it is even more important than ever that students have their own basic equipment:

School bag, reusable water bottle, reading book (Years 7-9), pencil case including, 2x black/blue pens, pink pen, pencil, ruler, rubber, calculator. Please ensure your child's belongings are labelled with their name where possible.

Q. When can I purchase a tie from school?

A. Parents and carers will be able to purchase a school tie from the Main Office from **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August.** The Main Office will only be open on **Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 8.30am to 3pm.**

Q. The Head of Maths mentioned that Year 7 students need a scientific calculator in September. Which calculator is it and where can I buy it?

A. The calculator recommended by the Maths department is the Casio FX-85GTX. They can be purchased from the usual retailers, alternatively you can purchase one from school for approximately £10. They will be available to buy from the Main Office from **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August.** The Main Office will only be open on **Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 8.30am to 3pm.**

Q. My child is nervous about using a school bus. What can I do to help them?

A. Reassure them that it is natural to be nervous but they will be fine. Encourage them to watch the How to... Use a School Bus video. You can find it in the Videos section of the Transition website.

Q. Will the school buses be running as normal in September?

A. We expect the school buses to run as normal in September however **where possible**, we recommend that students use alternative ways to travel to school. The bus company/school is waiting for updated guidance from the Government regarding any restrictions in the number of students allowed on a school bus at any one time. Current guidance is that all students are expected to wear a face covering on all buses. NEXUS (the bus company) have produced a video and resources aimed at Year 6 pupils. You can find it by clicking [here](#).

Q. Where can I find the school bus timetable?

A. On the main school homepage (not the transition page), there is a drop down menu called 'Key Information', the bus timetables are the 4th item in the list.

Q. How do I apply for a POP card for my child? (A POP card entitles the owner to discounted bus fares)

A. Please contact NEXUS for further details and an application form. [Click here](#).

Q. I have heard that some children are entitled to free travel, how do I find out if that applies to me?

A. The Local Authority website states that A free travel pass is available for your child if they live 3 miles or more (shortest walking distance) from your nearest appropriate school. Please [click here](#) for further details and an application form.

Q. Will my child be expected to wear full uniform in September?

A. Yes, all students are expected to wear full school uniform in September and follow all rules in respect of uniform, hair style, hair colour, make-up and jewellery. You can see the full policy in [here](#).

Q. Will my child be working in a 'bubble' in September?

A. Yes. Government guidance suggests that students are kept in Year group 'bubbles'. This means that Year 7 students will only mix with other Year 7 students during lessons and social times.

Q. Will my child need to bring their PE kit to school on the first day?

A. No, Year 7 students will not be expected to participate in a practical PE lesson on their first day.

Q. Are there any rules about the type or colour of trainers my child can wear in PE?

A. Trainers can be any colour. They must be a 'sporty' trainer with laces, and not a fashion trainer (this includes Converse).

Q. When will I be able to put money on my child's lunch account?

A. At the start of September you will receive an email inviting you to register with ParentMail. Once you have registered you can add money to your child's account. A 'How to... Use ParentMail' video is available in the Videos section.

Q. I will be driving my child to school, where can I drop them off safely?

A. Please drop your child off on a quiet street near school whilst being considerate to our neighbours. There is a pelican crossing near the school entrance and a lollipop person will be on duty at the start and end of each day to help students cross safely. We ask that parents and carers do not enter the school car park without permission from the Headteacher. This is particularly important during the busy start and end of the day.

Q. Will my child be in a Form group with their friends?

A. Your child's primary teachers have passed on information about who your child would like to be in a form group with. We try to make sure everyone is with at least one friend. All Year 7 students will have the opportunity to mix at break and lunch time.

Q. Will my child be taught in sets?

A. The majority of lessons are taught in mixed ability. This will usually be in form groups however in practical subjects, such as Design Technology, the classes are smaller. During Year 7 students are placed in sets for Maths.

Q. My child has a medical condition which means that they need to go to the toilet regularly, how can this be arranged?

A. Please ensure that when you complete the Pupil Registration Form (link on the main transition page) you tell us about their medical needs. We can arrange for a toilet pass to be issued to allow your child to go to the toilet when required.

Q. My child has a medical condition which school should be aware of, how should I let you know?

A. Please ensure that when you complete the Pupil Registration Form (link on the main transition page) you tell us about their medical needs. Some conditions will require you to complete a Healthcare Plan. If your child needs to take medication in school, an Administration of Medication form needs to be completed.

Q. Would like to speak to a member of staff about my child. Who and how do I contact school?

You need to contact school and ask to speak to your child's Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year. You can either telephone school or email [info@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:info@stmacademy.org.uk). Please bear in mind that pastoral staff do teach and therefore they may not be available to return your call straight away. We ask that you do not come into school without an appointment as there may not be an appropriate member of staff available to speak to you.

Q. How do I pay for my child's school lunches?

A. At the start of September you will receive an email asking you to register with ParentMail. Once you have registered you will be able to use your ParentMail account to top-up your child's account. You can also check their account balance and see what food and drink they are purchasing.

Q. Can I put a limit on the amount of money that my child can spend each day?

A. Every child has an automatic limit of £5 per day. This means they can buy up to £5 of food and drink in a day. If they try to spend more than this they will not be allowed to. If you would like to either increase or decrease the daily limit please contact the school office in September.

Q. My child receives free school meals, what do I need to do?

A. If you believe you are entitled to free school meals you need to complete a [simple online application](#) with the Local Authority. If your child is already receiving free school meals at primary school in North Tyneside this will usually transfer to St Thomas More automatically.

Q. My child receives free school meals, how will they pay for their lunch?

A. At around 11.30am each day their account will be credited with the free school meal allowance (£2.25). The system is discreet and they will pay for their lunch in the same way as other students.

Q. My child receives free school meals, can they use the money to buy food at break time?

A. No. The FSM allowance is added to the account around 11.30am each day and can only be used at lunchtime. If your child buys food at break time their account will go into a negative balance and this money will need to be repaid by topping up their account.

Q. Can my child add funds to their dinner account themselves?

A. Yes, if they bring cash into school there is a machine in the Dining Hall that they can use to load money onto their accounts. We do not recommend students bringing large amounts of money into school.

Q. Where do I purchase school uniform?

A. Our school uniform and PE kit is supplied by Emblematic. [Click here](#) for further details.

Q. Can girls wear socks or tights with their school skirt?

A. Girls can either wear black, opaque tights or white ankle socks.

**If you have any questions that haven't been answered either here, in the Parent Handbook or in the videos please email me at [transition@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:transition@stmacademy.org.uk).**