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14 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are all well.

## September – Full Opening of Schools

As I said in my letter last week, the guidance for reopening in September is very much based around the assumption that by then the number of infections in the community will be very low therefore the chance of anyone in school having the virus is also very low and the risk of others being infected very low and much lower than currently. The overriding principle is to minimise the number and length of contacts while allowing schools to operate at full capacity and with as normal a curriculum as possible.

We have put together a draft plan for September which will allow all students to return full time in September along the lines that I outlined last week. The plan will be refined this week and during the holiday and our risk assessment updated accordingly. September will be very far from business as usual for everyone in school but what we will be able to provide for students will be the next step back to normal school life for all of us.

In summary:

### Uniform and Equipment

Students will be expected to be in normal full uniform. The guidance for September indicates that normal washing of uniform will be appropriate.

Students will be expected to adhere to all of the uniform rules particularly around hair (length and colour) and no facial piercings/no plasters covering facial piercings and skirt length.

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

School bag, planner, reusable water bottle, reading book (Years 7-9), pencil case including, 2x black/blue pens, pink pen, pencil, ruler, rubber, calculator.

### Student Conduct and Behaviour

As St Thomas More takes its next step towards normal school life it is essential that everybody works together to ensure that staff and students remain safe and well. Good routines and clearly understood expectations will help us create a new temporary 'normal' and will help reduce the anxieties of everyone in our school community.

We will be making some changes to our Behaviour policy to reflect these new routines and expectations which will be shared via a letter to all parents/carers during the summer and via the school website. We know that students and their families have all had different experiences of lockdown and we will need to be mindful of the effects of this, these routines and expectations will be at the heart of the successful return to school.

### Arrival

Students will be encouraged to avoid public transport if possible but we know that many students use the school buses which we believe will run as normal (we will confirm this during the holiday). Students must wear face coverings on public transport.

There will be no changes to the start time for any year groups as students already arrive in a steady stream from about 8.00am so to impose any artificial changes would probably increase the numbers of students congregating and coming in at once rather than reduce them.

We are looking to set up some outdoor handwashing facility that students will be directed to before going to their year group zone.

### Zones and Lessons

Each year group (Year 12 and 13 will be combined) will have an allocated zone of rooms where lessons will take place. Due to the numbers of rooms needed, some specialist rooms such as Science labs and Music rooms will have to be used for general teaching. Students will move between rooms within the zones but not generally out of their zone.

This approach means that we will maintain the normal lesson and timetable structure and subjects will be taught in the groups they would be normally. Teachers will teach across year groups as normal and will move between zones. Within classrooms and moving around the site, students will be expected to maintain distance between each other as far as possible.

Teachers will be expected to maintain two metres distance from students during lessons and if they do need to be closer, to keep the time to a minimum. It is likely that we will put tape down in classrooms to show the teacher area. We are looking carefully at how Learning Support Assistants will support students in September.

Some practical rooms will be kept as flexible spaces to allow for KS4 and 5 practical lessons to continue. For some subjects, other than the different location of lessons, the curriculum will be able to be delivered relatively normally but for practical subjects at KS3 we know this won't be possible, at least for the first half term.

### Breaks and Lunchtimes

Outside areas of the school site will be zoned and movement at breaks will be kept to a minimum. Year groups will have specific toilets allocated for breaks and lunchtimes.

We are looking at ways in which we can limit significant impact on the length or timing of lunchtimes for all year groups. We will share the detailed arrangements for lunchtimes later in the summer.

### Handwashing/Sanitising

Students will be directed to wash hands at the start of the day, at break times and before eating at lunchtimes. This will be done in classrooms where possible or in designated toilets (and the outside area). Where rooms do not have a sink, hand sanitiser will also be provided.

### Enhanced Cleaning

There will be enhanced cleaning of flexible spaces and equipment, toilets and dining areas during the day. Cleaning products will be provided to allow staff to wipe down any shared items before and after use.

### End of the Day

Year groups will be dismissed in a staggered fashion (between 2.55 and 3.05) to minimise numbers leaving the school site at once.

### Lesson Times

Lesson times will be as close to normal as possible other than possibly taking five minutes from some lessons to allow arrangements for break/lunch/end of the day to operate.

### Student or Staff Illness

If your son/daughter has any of the known symptoms of Covid-19 (new/continuous cough, high temperature etc...) they should not attend school and book a virus test. If they develop any of the symptoms while in school, they should notify a member of staff immediately.

Procedures will continue to be in place if a student or member of staff shows Covid-19 symptoms while in school and we will work with Health Authorities in responding to any confirmed cases in the school community.

### Start of Term

We are looking at year groups returning on different days so that we can check our procedures and support students in the new environment. As Year 7 missed their normal transition days in July we also feel it's important for them to have one day in school on their own and a second day with minimal other students:

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August Bank Holiday

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September Staff INSET days

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September Year 7 return for Induction Day

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September Years 11 and 13 return (along with Year 7)

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September Years 8, 9, 10 and 12 return (all year groups in school)

Please find attached an updated school calendar for 2020/21.

At the end of term, we are saying goodbye to two long standing members of staff. Jill Neven, who has been at St Thomas More since 1996 working as our Art technician and supporting students in lessons, is retiring. Karen Gammack, Senior Assistant Headteacher, is taking up the position of Deputy Headteacher at Longbenton High School after seventeen years with us. Both Karen and Jill have made significant contributions to life at St Thomas More and will be greatly missed by students and staff alike.

Finally, I'd like to thank you for all of your support during these last few months which have been incredibly challenging for all of us. I hope that September will be the first step back to normal school life but that conditions will be such that normality will return sooner rather than later!

I hope that you and your families have a good summer.

Yours sincerely



Mr D Watson  
Headteacher