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Deputy Headteacher: Mr M Henderson BA  
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5 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are all well.

## September – Full Opening of Schools

As you may have seen in the media, the Government has issued guidance for the full opening of schools at the start of the autumn term in September:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

The guidance for secondary schools is very much based around the assumption that by September 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 therefore is to minimise the number and length of contacts (rather than eliminating them) while allowing schools to operate at full capacity and with as normal a curriculum and timetable as possible.

The guidance recognises that individual class bubbles are inappropriate so instead are suggesting year group bubbles. Within the bubbles the emphasis will be on hygiene rather than formal social distancing between students. Within school, year group bubbles will be kept apart as far as possible and schools have been asked to consider the feasibility of staggering the start and end of the school day and lunch times etc. The guidance also considers school transport, encouraging students to avoid school buses and public transport but recognises that for some schools and students there are no alternatives.

Leaders and governors in school will now consider the guidance in detail before formulating our response and plan for September. Whatever the arrangements are, it is highly likely that we will welcome back students from different year groups over a period of days at the start of term, rather than all year groups returning on the same day. This will allow us to work with a year group at a time and explain the changes that will be in place. As soon as I have any further updates, I will let you know.

Students will be required to return to school in full uniform. Our uniform provider, for specific items continues to be Emblematic Ltd (<https://emblematic.co.uk/longbenton-store/stm-ns/> Unit 26, North Tyne Industrial Estate, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 9SZ). Please find attached the list of school uniform.

## Year 11 and Year 13 Examinations Summer 2021

At the same time last week, the Government and Ofqual announced their plans and consultation for 2021 A Level and GCSE exams along with a position paper on Vocational qualifications:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/897137/Consultation\\_on\\_proposed\\_changes\\_to\\_the\\_assessment\\_of\\_GCSEs\\_AS\\_and\\_A\\_levels\\_in\\_2021\\_020620.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/897137/Consultation_on_proposed_changes_to_the_assessment_of_GCSEs_AS_and_A_levels_in_2021_020620.pdf)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/897029/VTQ\\_position\\_paper\\_-\\_operation\\_and\\_regulation\\_for\\_2020-21.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/897029/VTQ_position_paper_-_operation_and_regulation_for_2020-21.pdf)

The Ofqual contains a range of different proposals for different GCSE and A Level subjects; some of these seem to be very sensible and proportionate while for some subjects there are no changes suggested. The consultation is open to all stakeholders so I would encourage you to read the documents and respond as the proposals will have significant implications for next year's Year 11 and Year 13 students. Again, staff in school will now consider the proposals in detail before formulating plans for our Year 11 and Year 13 students from September.

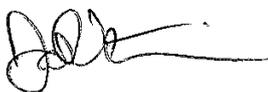
From discussions with other local and Diocesan Headteachers, I firmly believe that our provision for Year 12 and Year 10 students has been strong overall and a larger proportion of students have engaged well than in the majority of other schools. I am therefore very confident that, whatever the final arrangements for next year's examinations, students at St Thomas More will be very well prepared for them.

## Year 7-9 Reporting to Parents

Normally at this time of year, Year 7-9 students would receive an end of year report, which contains current levels of attainment and also attitudes to learning. In addition, there would be a written comment for your son/daughter from their Form Tutor and Head of Year. Before lockdown you will have received an interim report which contained levels of attainment and attitudes to learning. We have decided that instead of producing a written report, Form Tutors will contact you to have a conversation about your son/daughter. This will cover both the start of the school year, before lockdown, and also your son/daughters experiences during lockdown, which will help us plan for their return in September. If you would prefer a written report, please contact school and let us know.

Thank you again for all of your support for school during these extraordinary times.

Yours sincerely



Mr D Watson  
Headteacher