

1st June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and Governors,

As you know, work on the plan to re-open the school after lock-down started many weeks ago, and we were geared up to embark on a partial re-opening soon after the May half-term. Unfortunately, some last-minute governmental announcements have required us to alter our strategy, both in terms of timings and pupil intake. We have now done this and I would like to update you so that you can plan ahead. (We have also received some additional information since I last wrote and I have included that here too.)

The original plan of providing two weeks of classroom teaching to both Year 10 and Year 12 over a period of six weeks has had to be revised so that the teaching now fits into *five weeks only*, **starting 15th June**, in line with the governmental directive. Amongst Heads of Department and the Senior Management Team there is a consensus of opinion, and the following schedule will therefore now be implemented – provided the Government does not make any further announcements relating to restrictions:

Week commencing 1 st June	Week commencing 8 th June	Week commencing 15 th June	Week commencing 22 nd June	Week commencing 29 th June	Week commencing 6 th July	Week commencing 13 th July
Meetings with vulnerable children and families by invitation only	Further meetings with vulnerable children and families by invitation only (if required)	All of Year 12 only	Year 10a Surnames A-L only	All of Year 12 only	Year 10b Surnames M-Z only	All of Year 12 only

The parental survey completed before half-term indicates that about half of parents are happy to send their child to school during this period; this, combined with the fact that we are splitting Year 10 in half and numbers in Year 12 are half what they would be in lower year groups, means that we will be able to open safely and in accordance with the governmental guidelines. At NTS, given the layout of the site and the fact that we do not have separately housed sixth form, we have decided to err on the side of caution and not to open to both year groups (10 and 12) simultaneously, thus reducing the risk of contagion still further.

We have chosen to focus on ‘normal’ class teaching (rather than one-to-one sessions) because we feel that this is what the children need more than anything else, both from an educational perspective and in terms of their mental health.

I will reiterate here some key messages from my last communication that have remained unchanged:

- School will start at the usual time – with the usual Form period.
- Break will be reduced to 15 minutes, finishing at 11.30am and lunchtime will be reduced to 30 minutes. This is primarily to stop pupils mixing too much. **There will be no lunchtime or after-school clubs.**
- Lessons in the afternoon will start at 1pm.
- There will be **no canteen food available** and pupils/sixth-formers will need to bring packed lunches. In the circumstances, it is too great a risk to put on catering and we have closed the canteen for the foreseeable future. Your child will therefore need to bring a packed lunch. The water fountains and drinks machines in school have been switched off; we encourage you to ensure your child brings plenty of water with them. Bottles of water will be available in Reception from 12.35pm (cost = £1) for those who run out.
- **Sixth-formers will NOT be able to go off site or into town.**
- **School will close at 3.00pm.** (We may be able to offer after-school supervision but this will depend on the extent of the demand.)

Arranging **Home to School Transport** is still proving to be a major obstacle (hence the recent survey) and the LA are still negotiating with bus companies. We expect to go ahead with our plan even if transport cannot be arranged because most parents who are willing to send their child to school (and use buses) have said that they would be able to use their own transport if necessary. With a likely increase in traffic flow, we have reserved the main car-park opposite the main Reception/Library for your use when you drop off/collect your child. Please drive carefully; there

is a strict speed limit of 5mph. Please contact your child by phone, ideally, once you arrive. Do NOT enter the school buildings (unless you have contacted us in advance). If there is a change to the bus situation, I will update you as soon as possible.

In addition, please note the following:

- School uniform will be 'summer dress code' (i.e. no ties or blazers required). All other uniform rules should be adhered to.
- **PPE:** We have been advised that PPE is not necessary – for pupils or staff (except those Teaching Assistants who may be in close contact with pupils). I have, however, no objection if your child chooses to wear a face mask and/or gloves, provided they do so in a sensible and mature manner.
- Year 10 PE/Games lessons will go ahead as normal. On those days when pupils have a PE/Games lesson, pupils may **either**...
 - bring a pair of trainers/PE socks to change into**OR**
 - come to school in their school PE kit (with a blazer over the top to keep them warm in cool weather)

PLEASE NOTE:

PUPILS WILL NOT HAVE ACCESS TO CHANGING ROOMS (FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY REASONS)

- Supervision of Key Worker children and vulnerable children will continue as normal alongside the partial re-opening of the school as outlined above.

I remind you that you are, according to the Government, under no obligation to send your child into school during this time. I would urge you, however, to support our desire to get the pupils/sixth-formers back on track with their learning through meaningful face-to-face contact and communication with their teachers in the normal classroom environment. It is, in our view, entirely appropriate for the Government to consider Year 10 and Year 12 as a priority; with examinations taking place next year for these year groups, teachers and pupils/sixth-formers will be keen to meet and re-establish routines. Obviously, if your child is unwell – for whatever reason but especially if they have COVID symptoms – they should NOT attend.

To help you decide once and for all whether or not to send your child in, I thought you might be interested to read the following, taken from the Local Authority's guidance to Headteachers:

Public Health guidance for schools

[...] The County Council and its Public Health Team are committed to supporting schools to reach the right decision for them. In terms of the evidence about safety and transmission of the Covid-19 virus in schools, the following points are particularly important:

- *We are confident that the risk to children is much lower than the general population. While it is not zero, it is extremely rare for Covid-19 to cause serious harm to children.*
- *A high proportion of teachers are also in a low-risk age group. However, individual raised risks need to be considered.*
- *There is some evidence that children are less likely to spread the virus than adults – however, this evidence is not conclusive.*
- *A range of models have been considered nationally that have looked at the impact on the transmission of the virus of opening schools more widely. It is clear that a full reopening could have a significant impact, which is why this is not being recommended at this time. However, the limited reopening proposed, with appropriate social distancing in place as far as possible, is felt to be manageable while keeping transmission rates low.*

Public Health impact of ongoing closure

In reaching decisions on the next steps, it is crucial to be aware that of course there are public health impacts from maintaining school closures. Attending school is a public health benefit, both because of the profound impact of improved education and because of the benefits of social interaction (even while physically

distancing). These benefits are particularly important for more vulnerable children, for whom there are many other benefits as well. It is therefore very important that we do ultimately begin to get children back to school in a safe and measured way. While it is obvious that any reduction in social/physical distancing has the potential to increase transmission of the virus in the community, the risks associated with the limited reopening of schools that is being proposed are generally felt to be small, if individual vulnerabilities are taken into account. These risks have to be balanced against the potential harm caused to children by an extended absence from school.

You will undoubtedly be aware of recent media coverage of the rate of infection across Cumbria, which has largely focused on the data suggesting that Barrow has the highest rate of infection in the country. [...]. The rate of infections detected is very significantly affected by the rate of testing – this has been a significant factor in the Barrow statistics. Even something apparently more robust, like the death rate, is substantially affected by the age structure of the population. So knowing whether particular areas genuinely have higher or lower rates of infection than others is not straightforward.

Testing, contact tracing and outbreak control

Contact tracing is an essential component of being able to release any lock-down measures safely. Nationally the Test and Trace service launched on 28 May. While there is still a degree of uncertainty about how that will impact at a local level in the short term, we have also launched a local testing and contact tracing system that will be operational and accessible to schools from 1st June. Further details of how to access this service will be released to schools later. Schools will have access to a central contact point locally where they can notify the public health team about suspected or confirmed cases, instigate testing and contact tracing for staff and pupils as necessary, and access advice and support around infection prevention and control measures. Where necessary, this will also trigger a local outbreak control team to work directly with schools.

The school environment

In beginning to open up further, all schools will have to work in a “Covid Secure” manner, in line with guidance on maintaining good physical distancing. Schools will [...] already be reaching their own judgement on whether they are individually able to be “Covid Secure” through the risk assessment process [...].

Our Risk Assessment Documentation & Codes of Conduct for Pupils/Sixth-Formers

Both these documents are available on the home page of our website, in the section entitled “School Re-Opening”. The risk assessment is a live document and will be updated as and when required. (There is also a Code of Conduct for members of staff and this has been circulated in advance of the school re-opening.)

Pupils will be issued with the COVID Code of Conduct and talked through the new rules on their first day in school. There is therefore no need for you to print this off.

Pupils (and staff) must abide by the Code of Conduct; if you child persistently fails to do this, we will have no choice but to send them home, for the safety of other members of the school.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these rapidly changing times. I do hope that the partial re-opening of the school will be of real benefit to your child and their learning. Continue to keep you and your family safe!

Kind regards,



Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster