

Farmor's School

Coronavirus Precautionary Measures for September 2020 School Re-opening

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

It is our intention to open fully for all students from the start of the Autumn Term, in line with government policy and guidance. This document sets out the measures taken to control any risks associated with this re-opening in terms of the potential spread of Coronavirus within the school or wider community.

The principles guiding school re-opening are that:

- School should be as normal as possible for students in September – this will support students' mental health and be of benefit to their education.
- The risks associated with coronavirus will be fully considered, and measures taken in line with government guidance to mitigate these risks.
- Variations to normal routines and procedures should be simple, proportionate, and practicable.
- The school must be ready to act quickly and decisively should there be a confirmed case of coronavirus.

There are health risks associated with re-opening schools. However, there are social, emotional and educational risks if schools remain closed or only open partially. This document specifically addresses the measures taken to control the risk of viral spread but should be considered in the wider context of the pressing need to get students back to school.

The key control measures put in place are as follows:

1: Keep different age-groups of students separate as far as practicable

Students will be placed in 'control groups' which will be kept apart as much as possible. For years 7 to 11, these control groups will be their year group. The Sixth Form (year 12 and 13) will operate as one single control group.

To maintain separation of these groups, we will:

- Avoid any mixed-group lessons or activities (e.g. clubs, trips).
- Designate outside spaces where students in each group may go at break-times.
- Standardise the length of break-times at 35 minutes each to enable all students to access the canteen.
- Stagger access times to the canteen to purchase food, which will be take-away only.
- Designate seating areas on buses so that students are seated in their control group.
- Implement a one-way system for movement around the site to minimise chance encounters with students outside of the control group.
- Increase adult supervision between lessons and at break times to reinforce expectations.

The changes to break times mean that the school day will be extended on a Monday only by 15 minutes. The school day will therefore finish at 2.35pm on a Monday and on 3.25pm on every other day, as before.

2. Increase the level of hygiene

Hand hygiene and the cleaning of surfaces are two very important aspects of preventing the spread of coronavirus. To reduce the risk of infection via direct or indirect transmission, we will:

- Ask students to wash/sanitise their hands when they arrive each day, and each time they transition from one place to another. Wash stations will be available around the site, and sanitisation stations placed in each classroom and around the school.
- Sanitise desks and the relevant equipment between each lesson.
- Ensure a supply of tissues for students in each classroom to 'Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.'
- Keep teachers in the same teaching room wherever possible to ensure oversight of hygiene in that location and manage student transitions.
- Avoid use of PE changing rooms by allowing students to wear PE kit throughout the day on the days they have timetabled PE.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning of shared areas and hotspot surface areas, including toilets and door handles.
- Increase signage to reinforce key hygiene messages and signpost sanitisation stations.

Some schools have decided to keep students in the same room or building for most of the school day and expect teachers to move between classes. In our context, this is neither necessary nor advisable in our opinion for the following reasons:

- Only two transitions are avoided by keeping students in the same room (the two lessons which are timetabled back-to-back).
- Most student movement takes place outdoors where we know the risk of transmission to be substantially lower.
- The one-way system will substantially reduce the number of other people a student will pass as they move location.
- Teachers can take ownership of their classrooms and ensure they are hygienic.
- Teachers are present and able to manage exit and entry to classrooms.
- Further restrictions would limit access to the full curriculum and specialist facilities.

Procedures for sanitising desks and equipment between classes are simple to implement. Coupled with good hand hygiene, we believe that allowing movement between lessons is manageable and proportionate.

3. Minimise contact and maintain social distancing

The risk of infection is reduced if individuals minimise the contact and maximise the distance between themselves and those not in their control group. This means avoiding being too near to those not in one's control group for too long and avoiding unnecessary contact.

To help students keep their distance and avoid unnecessary chance encounters, we will:

- Organise classroom layouts so that there is a reasonable distance between the teacher (who moves between control groups) and the nearest students.
- Open windows to improve air movement, which is known to reduce transmission.
- Require students travelling on public transport to wear face masks.
- Advise students of the benefits of face masks when traveling on buses or in cars with those outside the family home.
- Limit close contact between teachers/teaching assistants and students, making use of break-out spaces, sneeze-screens and other safeguards wherever possible.
- Limit visitors to the school and pre-arrange meetings so these can be managed safely.
- Suspend school trips which involve overnight stays.
- Undertake a full risk assessment for any other school trips and put necessary controls in place.
- Hold one-to-one meetings with students outside, in large spaces or with the use of sneeze-screens.
- Communicate a clear 'stay at home' message for those who are unwell or asked to isolate.

4. Acting quickly to control the spread of the virus

Despite our best efforts, we cannot eliminate the risk that someone in our school community catches this virus. However, should this occur, we will be ready to act quickly to contain further spread of the virus, with the advice and support of Public Health England (PHE).

To ensure we are in a good position to act quickly to control any case/s, we will:

- Monitor local infection levels and transmission rates.
- Keep records of suspected and confirmed cases within the school community.
- Isolate and send home any symptomatic individuals and ask that they immediately get tested.
- Act quickly where there are confirmed cases to inform those affected and advised to isolate on the instruction of PHE.

If a student or member of staff tests positive, we will work closely and rapidly with PHE to identify all 'contacts'. A contact is an individual who is at risk of infection due to having been in close contact with a carrier. Contacts will be told to isolate for 14 days. Where this occurs, no other family members are required to isolate unless any become symptomatic.

PHE define 'outbreak' as two *linked* confirmed cases within one school i.e. it is likely that one confirmed case has infected the other, or they have both been infected by a third party, whilst at school. In such instances, there will be a much wider requirement to isolate. We will inform all parents and students if we have an outbreak at the school and issue clear instructions about what action is required.

5. Continually review and adjust these measures

Inevitably, there will need to be adjustments to the above measures as we learn more and if circumstances change. Our Health & Safety Steering Group, the senior leadership team and governors will maintain oversight of this aspect of our provision.

A full risk assessment is in place, which is available on our website.

Face Masks

The current guidance from Public Health England (PHE) is that face masks should not be worn in school. This appears to contradict the rules about wearing masks in shops, for example. However, PHE point out that:

- Schools are not public places and students mix within a fixed population where contacts can be traced easily.
- Children and teenagers often don't adopt good habits regarding masks. They tend to regularly touch the mask, take it on and off, and don't store it hygienically.
- There is also evidence that this age group reduce other more beneficial behaviours (like hand washing) if they have the false security of a mask. Hand washing is much more effective at preventing the spread of this virus. PHE advise that schools focus on the highest impact measures.

Given this advice, our policy is that students and staff may choose to wear a face mask but are not obliged to do so. The only exception to this is if they travel on a public bus service where the law requires them to do so. The government have asked local authorities to also advise parents that students should wear masks on school bus services also. However, at present this is a decision for the parent and students, and not a school requirement or policy.

It has recently been announced that secondary school students in Scotland will be required to wear masks when moving between lessons in corridors and in other indoor, shared spaces. If England follows suit, we will inform you immediately. It is worth noting that most of our student movement is outside and we have very few corridors.

Further information

This document, the risk assessment, and the measures the school have taken with regard to September re-opening, are in accordance with guidance by the Department of Education, which can be found here:

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

Conclusion

Control measures are only effective if they are followed. We would ask for parents help in explaining to their children the importance of respecting and following the measures we have in place. Although they personally may not feel at risk, or particularly vulnerable should they contract this virus, their actions impact others who may not feel the same. We have a number of clinically vulnerable members of our community whom we must protect.

We hope that this document reassures you that we are taking sensible steps to facilitate a return to school. There is considerably more detail which sits behind this summary and there has been a great deal of hard work behind the scenes to bring these plans to fruition. We very much look forward to seeing all students return to school in September.