



# St. Thomas More High School

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1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I do hope you and your families remain safe and well and were able to enjoy something of a break together this summer holiday. I am writing to all parents and students to provide an update of our plans for full reopening following the many events and changes over the last few weeks. I do hope that this will be the last update before next week but as you can imagine, things are changing by the minute.

One thing is for sure; we are really looking forward to working with your son/daughter over the coming year. It's been a long time since we had the school full of life and students fully engaged with their learning so I, along with all the staff at St Thomas More, are really looking forward to welcoming students back this week and next.

Please note that these changes are for the first part of the school year and we will review how the new system is working after three weeks. Please read the following arrangements, required for a safe return for all.

## 1. Registration for year groups at the start of the new term

**Year 7 and Year 12** will start school on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September** and have two full induction days to allow us to carefully and safely introduce students to the new ways of working whilst they are on the school site.

On **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September**, **all students** will return and be met and directed to an area on the field. Each form group, will be met and guided by their form tutor to their registration room, where they will be registered and remain for the rest of the morning. During the morning each year group will be talked to about the new routines and timetable in school.

## 2. School Day

**Arrival at school – not before 8.30am**

**Where possible, students should walk or cycle to school.** Whatever way your child is travelling to school, please ask them **NOT** to arrive before 8.30am.

Students arriving before 8.30am will be held outside, whatever the weather, so please dress appropriately. Students who arrive before 8.25am will be able to access a breakfast service in the canteen for grab and go food only. Students who are not purchasing breakfast will be asked to remain outside.

The school day will **start at the normal time of 8.40am** but have an **earlier finish at 3.20pm** to allow students to avoid large numbers of other students and the public during the peak hours of transport. We will review this change after three weeks.

Exits will be open by 3.20pm at and as soon as students are released from their lessons they should exit school using the most direct route and leave without delay. There should be no congregating outside in the school grounds, students should leave immediately. On departure, they will also be reminded to wash hands/sanitize. If getting the public or school contract buses, face coverings must be put on **BEFORE** getting on the bus.

**There remains no facility for parents to drive onto the site or stop outside the school gates.**

Please note the current requirement to wear face coverings on public and school transport. Attached is further guidance regarding transport for parents and students from SBC and C2C. Students must be considerate to members of the public when travelling to and from school. Pavements near the school can become very crowded and all students are expected to maintain social distancing and show that St Thomas More students are aware of their duty to others.

### The School Day

Timings	Year 7/8/9	Year 10/11	Year 12/13
Registration 8.30 – 9.10	Form time and Registration	Form time and Registration	Form time and Registration
P1 9.10 – 10.10	Single Lesson	Double lesson	Double lesson
P2 10.10 – 11.20	Single Lesson	Extended Lesson Change Over	
11.10 – 11.20			
P3 11.20 – 12.20	LUNCH Outside. Called in separately	Single lesson	Double lesson
P4 12.20 – 1.20	Single Lesson	LUNCH Outside until called in	
P5 1.20 – 2.20	Single Lesson	Double lesson	LUNCH Outside/offsite
P6 2.20 – 3.20	Single Lesson		Assembly, EPQ, ,enrichment, home TBC

### Lunchtime and food

There will be no mid-morning break. The extended lesson changeover will allow students to visit the toilet, and move to their next classroom but there will not be enough time to go outside. Year groups will be allocated separate areas for lunchtime, to keep contact to a minimum between years. Students will be encouraged outside during their lunch hour. Students will be able to eat packed lunch, food and snacks brought in from home outside using the bins. Students must not share food or drinks. Year 12 and Year 13 will still be able to go off site at lunchtime to ease congestion; on returning to the school on their allocated day for enrichment, they will be directed to wash their hands to ensure

good hygiene. Sixth Formers will also have use of the Snack Shack in the new building from 11.10am to 2.00pm, which will run a grab and go takeaway menu.

There will be a grab and go only menu for KS3 and 4 at lunchtime for the foreseeable future. There will be both hot and cold menu options available daily. Please note that NO CASH will be handled in school. Top up for their School Gateway accounts must be done electronically.

Students will be asked to wash or sanitise their hands when joining the queue for food, they will sanitise again before entering the food collection area and payment area and reminded to wash their hands as they leave the dining hall area.

### **3. Changes to school routines**

A strict enforcement of a one-way system on two staircases will operate. The stairs from the ground floor in the old building between English and Spanish and between RE and Maths in the new building will have signage and be staffed during the day, to ensure the new routes are learnt quickly. All doors, including some fire exits will be open for students to use, to ease entrance, exit and movement around the school.

We have investigated in detail the possibility of ‘bubbling’ certain year groups but have concluded that the risks associated with doing so are not less than the risks of running normally. Requiring teachers to move around carries its own problems, and the amount of time students would be exposed to one another moving between classrooms is comfortably below the 15 minute threshold stipulated in the guidance as critical. ‘Bubbling’ would also constrain curriculum time, especially in specialist areas and we have decided that a full and balanced curriculum delivered by specialist teachers, in specialist classrooms, for all students more advantageous to their education. We are unable, at this point however to accommodate music lessons for Year 7 and 8 in the autumn term and instrumental lessons will continue online with Morley’s Academy <https://morleymusic.co.uk/schools/>

#### **Face Coverings**

The guidance regarding wearing of face coverings has changed in the last few days. As a result of these changes we will be allowing students to wear face coverings in communal areas (except when eating and drinking) and along corridors if they wish. If you and your son/ daughter decide they do wish to use this preventative measure, then please ensure they have at least two face coverings on them at any time when they are in school. These should be cleaned/ replaced on a daily basis.

Whilst in school, face coverings should be kept in a clean plastic bag. Face coverings must NOT be shared.

#### **Please see below DfE Guidance as published on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

*Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully.*

*On the basis of current evidence, in light of the mitigating measures education settings are taking, and the negative impact on communication, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. There is greater use of the system of controls for minimising risk, including through keeping in small and consistent groups or bubbles, and greater scope for physical distancing by staff within classrooms. Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.*

**A parent guide with links to a video for your son/ daughter to watch is attached to this letter**

We will continue to focus our attention on reminding students to keep apart at lunchtime. We will have both gates open in the morning and at the end of the day for students to leave and arrive on site and remain, weather permitting on the playground and field.

**Uniform and Equipment**

For the start of term, all students must wear their blazers to and from school. The blazer is a practical way of carrying around personal equipment, and on many days it removes the need to wear a coat, thereby cutting down on the things brought in from outside that have to be carried with them during the school day.

**All other uniform requirements are as normal**, including for Sixth Form. Ties should be worn with the Sixth Form suit. Please remember that hoodies and other non-uniform items must not be worn. Sixth Formers will be allowed to go home when their lessons have finished for the day. This should reduce congestion at exits at the end of the day but is not compulsory and individuals may stay in school to study if they wish. Students must bring all their equipment as sharing of equipment will not be allowed.

There will be no peripatetic lessons or other extra-curricular activities before school, at lunchtime and after-school at the start of term in September. This restricted provision will be kept under review in the light of DfE guidance and our own risk assessments: we aim to lift restrictions as soon as we can safely do so.

Staff will do their best to preserve social distancing and not move around the class.

Essential practical activities will be subject to individual risk assessments, approved by the SLT Line Manager. Students may not take part in practical activities if they have not brought the equipment needed by that subject eg aprons for art and D&T etc

Enhanced cleaning during the day will continue and classroom doors and windows will remain open throughout the day. Classrooms will be arranged as much as possible to ensure desks are in rows facing the front.

**Social Distancing and Handwashing advice**

It is essential that everyone washes their hands more often, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing with soap employs mechanical action that loosens bacteria and viruses from the skin, rinsing them into the drain. Drying hands afterwards makes the skin less hospitable to the virus. Hand sanitiser can be effective if soap is not available or the situation makes using soap less feasible (i.e. when outside) but using hand sanitiser provides none of the virus-destroying friction that rubbing your hands together and rinsing with water provides.

Please see the [latest guidance and video on handwashing](#) from the NHS.

I am asking that **ALL** students bring their own personal hand sanitiser into school with them. This will allow for regular sanitising as they move in and out of areas.

The school has sanitisers / handwash basins in all toilets and at main entrances and doors, but it is vital that all students wash/ sanitise hands on a regular basis.

Throughout the day, your son/daughter will be asked and reminded to wash/sanitize their hands but I hope that they will take the responsibility to ensure good hygiene practice.

They must maintain social distancing in all areas of the school and outside during breaks. This must also be applied as they travel to and from school.

It is important for us all to realise that these are unprecedented times. I will need your son/daughter's total co-operation and compliance with school rules when they return.

Please do discuss our expectations with them and explain that there will be zero tolerance with regard to poor behaviour and non-compliance with health & safety rules relating to Covid 19 and general behaviour rules around school.

All of the above will be explained to them in a presentation when they first arrive in school. Social distancing rules apply in and around the school site.

### **Absence**

If your son/daughter is unable to come to school due to ill health, please phone the school as normal. Please be clear as to the reason for absence.

### **Staff absence**

If staff are absent due to unforeseen circumstances, the timetable may have to be amended. This may result in lessons being cancelled and your son/daughter being sent home earlier than expected. If we have to do this on the day, we will contact you by phone. If we are aware of problems the day before, we will notify you by email.

### **Illness**

If your son/daughter feels ill or unwell at any time, they must come down to the medical room/reception where they will be attended to.

If they display any symptoms relating to Covid 19, they will be isolated and placed in the first aid tent outside the main entrance.

You will be called to collect them immediately and take them home. Please follow NHS guidelines if symptoms are related to Covid 19.

Notify the school as soon as possible if your son/daughter is tested and you have a result. **This is extremely important.**

## **4. Before Leaving Home each day – Important Things to Consider**

Please ensure that you have carried out a health check on your son/daughter to ensure that each morning they do not have any symptoms linked to Covid 19. If they are unwell, they should stay at home.

### **Please see guidance from the NHS:**

#### **Check if you or your child has coronavirus symptoms**

The symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are usually mild, but some people can become very unwell.

#### **Main symptoms**

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)

- **new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms.

**If your son/ daughter has any of these symptoms DO NOT send or bring them to school. PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE CHECKED YOUR SON/ DAUGHTER EACH MORNING FOR SYMPTOMS. IF UNWELL, THEY MUST STAY AT HOME.**

**Urgent advice: Use the 111 online OR [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) coronavirus service if you have any of the following:**

high temperature

- new, continuous cough
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

111 will tell you what to do and help you get a test if you need one. Call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Parents and carers need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they or their son/daughter are displaying symptoms. Staff and pupils **must not** come into the school if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them in school.
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS [testing and tracing for coronavirus website](#), or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

**Do not go to places like a GP surgery, hospital or pharmacy**

Parents and staff **must** inform the school immediately of the results of a test:

- if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.
- if someone tests positive, they should follow the '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-

isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

## 5. Future Plans

As you can imagine, throughout this period, it has been very difficult to make concrete plans for the future. However, during August, we have been meeting to review the guidance, update our risk assessments and work hard to ensure we are ready to open safely. We have been working on streamlining the online platform for learning and look forward to sharing information on this with in due course. Our calendar of events for next academic year has been decimated by this global pandemic and we share much of your frustration and disappointment that events have to be cancelled, run in a more controlled and formal way and everything seems to take longer. We hope to keep you involved in the life of the school and rely on your understanding and support as we move forward together in this new academic year.

Thank you for all your support and co-operation since we have gone into lockdown. It has been a very difficult time for everyone and I hope that we will now be able to move forward in providing some really positive learning experiences for your son or daughter.

**Please note, despite all the safeguarding measures we have put in place the school cannot be completely safe and risk free.**

Yours sincerely



Mrs G Ackred  
Headteacher