



1 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

A warm welcome to all of our new families and welcome back to our existing ones. I'm so looking forward to welcoming your children back to school this week. The staff are too and we've all been working hard over the summer to ensure we're ready to get our students off to the best start possible. The start of term plans we communicated to you before the summer holiday haven't changed, but I've included the information again in this letter. If you haven't already, please take a look at the short 'info-film' embedded into the letter which I hope you and your child will find useful.

As you are no doubt aware, on 2 July the Department for Education issued guidance for the reopening of all schools to all students from September 2020. It's important to note that your legal responsibility to ensure that your child attends school has been reinstated and that schools have been asked to follow their usual attendance procedures in the event of student absence from September. A copy of their guidance can be found [here](#).

Since the guidance was issued, we have been making plans and undertaking comprehensive school-based risk assessments to enable us to re-open that are in line with the government guidance and Health and Safety legislation. The Governing Body have examined our risk assessment and have agreed our plans for opening from September. The planning for the full re-opening of the school has been very complex but we're really looking forward to welcoming our existing students and also our new Year 7 and Year 12 students back to school.

We appreciate that some of you will have concerns about sending your child to school at this time. Please be assured that ensuring that all students and staff members are safe and that any risks are mitigated as effectively as possible has been at the forefront of our planning. The DfE guidance stipulates several protective measures that schools should have in place for the return of all students.

**The protective measures are set out below:**

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach

**Face coverings**

I wrote to our school community before the summer break to confirm that students and staff could wear their own clean face coverings in school should they wish. My priority is still to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff. In addition, it is now to also mitigate the risks of Covid-19 to vulnerable families and communities for whom coronavirus poses a significant risk and coupled with that to minimise the risk of further lockdowns for groups of students and staff at our school.



In the last week, the government has released new guidance around the use of face coverings in schools which is accessible [here](#). Headteachers have now been tasked with using their discretion to consider what is right for their school environment. Government guidance changes often, with little notice, and it is not always clear how it has been formulated or how it should be interpreted. Our students, parents, carers and staff require some assurance that the school's protection measures will keep them safe. Any assurance we can offer, even if it goes beyond what is requested by the government, will help to maintain the wellbeing and morale of all. Therefore, I am now strongly encouraging students and staff at Cotham to wear face coverings when in communal areas of the school:

- on entry to the school each morning
- in corridors, when moving around students' designated 'zones' and when moving between zones during lesson changeovers
- outside at break and lunchtime where it is difficult to maintain effective social distancing
- when queuing up to access the dining hall or moving around student-designated break and lunch spaces
- travelling on school coaches to our off-site playing field at Stoke Lodge
- at the end of the day when exiting the school site

If worn face coverings **must** be clean and hygienic. They can be plain or patterned, reusable or disposable, but they must be slogan free. Everyone is expected to respect the choices made by others to wear a face covering, and no-one will be discriminated against for wearing or not wearing a face covering.

Students and staff may **choose for themselves** to continue to wear face masks in classrooms or at any time elsewhere if they wish.

This guidance is not a school rule, does not form part of the uniform policy and is therefore not mandatory. However, out of necessity, this guidance will remain under review.

### Further information on face coverings for parents and carers

- Parents and carers are not required to wear a face covering when attending the school site to drop off or pick up their children
- Parents and carers need not wear a face covering if visiting the student or main school receptions as there is at least 2 metres distance between the lobby and the receptionist/ an acrylic screen at the window
- If parents and carers are invited to enter the school building, they will be asked to wear a face covering, as they would if entering a shop or other public building
- Staff working one to one with children may wear face coverings, subject to risk assessment. The Risk Assessment would need to also evaluate whether the child should also be expected to wear a face covering if the length of time of close up working is likely to be more than 15 minutes
- Staff conducting meetings with visitors to the school may wear face coverings and may ask other attendees to do so. This will depend on the length of the meeting and the space where the meeting is held. Visitors are more of an "unknown quantity" and therefore greater precautions should be taken than when meeting with colleagues
- The first aid room is equipped with supplies of PPE. Staff treating children for injuries or illness may use gloves, aprons, disposable face masks and visors as deemed appropriate for the particular circumstances. In the case of anyone exhibiting potential symptoms of Covid 19, full PPE including masks, aprons, visors and gloves will be worn by First Aiders.



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Further guidance on the safe wearing of face coverings can be found [here](#). In line with the government's guidance, if Bristol or the school must go into a local lockdown at any point, wearing face coverings at Cotham will become a mandatory expectation in communal areas.

I will continue to review our procedures and risk assessment in line with any further developments.

### **The start of the new school year**

Each year at Cotham we stagger the start of the year so that our students can get off to the best start and next September will follow a similar pattern.

#### **New Year 7**

Your child should return to school on Thursday 3 September at 10.45am.

Their designated entrance and exit is the main Visitors Reception on Cotham Lawn Road.

We have prepared a short video for our students which details some of this important information. This can be found [here](#)

#### **New Year 8**

Your child should return to school on Friday 4 September for 10am.

Their designated entrance and exit is the PE Gate on Hartfield Avenue (students will know this as the gate that they use to exit school when they have PE lessons).

We have prepared a short video for our students which details some of this important information. This can be found [here](#)

#### **New Year 9**

Your child should return to school on Friday 4 September for 10am.

Their designated entrance and exit is the usual Student Entrance on Cotham Road.

We have prepared a short video for our students which details some of this important information. This can be found [here](#)

#### **New Year 10**

Your child should return to school on Friday 4 September for 10.45am.

Their designated entrance and exit is the Site Gate on Cotham Lawn Road (students will know this as the gate that is next to the main staff carpark and K block).

We have prepared a short video for our students which details some of this important information. This can be found [here](#).

#### **New Year 11**

Your child should return to school on Friday 4 September for 10.45am.

Their designated entrance and exit is the old Student Entrance on Cotham Lawn Road (students will know this as the old student entrance gate which leads onto the lower tarmac area).

We have prepared a short video for our students which details some of this important information. This can be found [here](#).

### **What your child can expect when they return**

In order to reduce the amount of contact that students in each year group may have with other students, we have introduced 'Year Group bubbles'. These year group bubbles will be located in their own zone of the school. Each Year Group bubble will also have its own:

- Designated student entrance and exit
- Designated toilet
- Designated classrooms that are used for the majority of their lessons



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- Designated break area
- Designated lunch time and lunch canteen
- Designated lunch break area

### **Timings of the school day**

We're very fortunate that the school site has multiple entrance gates which have allowed us to avoid having to stagger the start time of the school day. The day will remain as it currently is and will be from **8.30am to 2.45pm**.

The exceptions to this, as currently, will be:

- Year 11 who will be in school for an additional 'Upgrade' session with their teachers from Tuesday to Thursday until 3.45pm (commencing Tuesday 15 September).
- Year 10, 11 and Post 16 students who have P6 lessons scheduled in their usual timetable.

It is vitally important that your child does their best to arrive at their designated entrance on time. **Our designated entrances will open from 8.20am and close at 8.30am. Students will not be able to enter the school site before 8.20am.** Any students who arrive late (after 8:30am) will not be able to gain access via their designated entrance and will instead need to enter the school via the Student Entrance on Cotham Road.

### **Social Distancing and Hygiene**

Your child's experience in school will be a little different but just as purposeful and enjoyable. These differences are to ensure the highest levels of safety for students and staff during this period.

- On arrival they will be greeted at their designated entrance and encouraged to sanitise their hands. All students will be asked to sanitize their hands every time they enter or leave a classroom.
- The majority of your child's lessons will take place in a single classroom in a year group zone. This will enable us to ensure that students are not mixing unnecessarily with other students in other year groups.
- Each classroom has been designed so that the teacher is able to socially distance themselves from our students.
- Each classroom will be cleaned thoroughly at the end of each day.
- Additional cleaning of classrooms will take place (for instance in design technology) if your child needs to enter a specialist classroom which is being used by another year group.
- All classrooms will have their windows open to ensure good ventilation and good respiratory hygiene.

### **The school curriculum**

The majority of students' classroom based lessons will take place in their Year Group bubble zone.

Your child will access all of the usual subjects that we offer to students. Some of their specialist lessons will take place in classrooms that are designed for the delivery of specialist subjects (like Design Technology or Art). We have a system of protocols in place for these teachers to collect their students and walk them over to the specialist classroom.



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### **Break and Lunch Time**

- Students will enjoy their break and lunch times in their own designated areas so that your child is only able to meet students within their year group bubble. This will ensure that they do not mix with other groups of students in the school.
- Students will be closely supervised by senior members of staff whilst on their break and lunch to ensure that they adhere to social distancing and hygiene rules.
- All students will be asked to sanitise their hands prior to their break and again at the end of break as they return to their designated year group zone.
- Students will not be able to purchase any food or drink during our mid morning break. Our water fountains have also been turned off. Students will be required to bring in their own full water bottle and snacks for their break.
- Our canteens will be open for lunch and students will be able to enter their designated canteen at a certain time.
- Students who are eligible for free school meals will receive their usual food allowance.

### **Uniform, Equipment and Travel Arrangements**

- It is vitally important that students come to school with their school equipment, including a fully stocked pencil case, their planner and their lanyard. Please ensure that you support them with this and help them to pack their bag with their folder the night before.
- Students are expected to wear their school uniform. Please contact your child's Learning Coordinator if there is an issue with uniform. For safeguarding purposes, all students are expected to wear their lanyard at all times and will be asked to show this to identify themselves when they arrive in school.
- We would encourage our students to either walk or cycle to school. Our bike sheds will be open for students to secure their bikes.
- In the event that your child does need to use public transport, please speak to them about the importance of washing their hands as soon as they can afterwards. Please also check the timings for their proposed journey. The DfE has produced the [attached guidelines](#) for those that need to use public transport and advise all persons using public transport to wear a face mask at all times of their journey.
- It is important that students adhere to social distancing when making their journey to and from school.

### **Symptoms and illness in school**

- **Students should not come onto the school site if:**
  - **they are displaying any Covid-19 symptoms**
  - **they live with someone who has recently started to display any Covid-19 symptoms**
  - **they live with someone who has tested positive to Covid-19**
  - **A link to the NHS page for coronavirus symptoms can be found [here](#).**
- If a child starts to display symptoms on the school site we will isolate them in a secure and comfortable setting and immediately make contact with you as parent/carer to arrange for collection or travel. Students who display symptoms should then isolate in accordance with [government guidelines](#). Parents are encouraged to have their child tested if they display symptoms; advice on getting tested can be found [here](#).





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We are really looking forward to seeing your child again and welcoming them back to school. Please be assured that we have made every effort to ensure that the school site and your child are safe. Please also be assured that we are aware that for many students, coming back to school after such a long period of time may feel quite daunting. Please know that we understand this and are here to support you and them with the transition back into school life.

Kindest regards

**Jo Butler**  
(Headteacher)



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