



16 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### September 2020 – Reconnection, Recovery and Resilience

We are really looking forward to the full return of all students in September and we recognise and understand the challenges the closure of Plymstock School has brought for all of us.

We have student timetables prepared and are fully staffed ready for September. This letter is to assist your understanding of the plans for September and how they have been devised; we want you and your son/daughter to have a good break and not have any additional, unanswered questions about their return to school.

### Recognising the impact of School Closure

No student at Plymstock School will be made to feel they have fallen behind their peers when we fully re-open; all children have been affected and therefore, will need personalised support and care.

We recognise ALL our students have had the shared disruption of our School closing or being partially closed but will have all had very different experiences of their time at home over the last few months.

In this context, our staff have been working to evaluate the progress and engagement of students working from home. This information is being shared with their new, September teachers to ensure we plan for them to make the best possible start and that our lessons and programmes meet their individual needs.

### The Full Re-Opening of Plymstock School

The most important point for me to emphasise is for a secondary school this is a complex and detailed exercise. Central to our planning is the safety and well-being of our students and staff. Since the DfE guidance was released on 2 July, we have been working on a framework to implement this.

This letter and the accompanying **Frequently Asked Questions Sheet** is designed to support Parents and Carers with an overview and enable you and your child to prepare for their return to school in September.

As with previous announcements from the DfE, it has been indicated that additional information will be released in August. This will be alongside an on-going review of the data around the COVID-19 pandemic and any further change in the transmission of the virus. This may further impact on plans we have made.

Therefore, more information and specific details will be communicated from the week commencing 24 August as updates are received. This will include full information on the timings for arrival, new on-site routines for arrival and registration and induction arrangements for all students.

This letter focuses on the learning and logistics for September, underpinned with a very careful eye on the safety of both our students and colleagues.

Parents and Carers will note that the DfE Guide released on 2 July states that **Essential measures include:**

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

The DfE guidance states that "**School leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk.**"

We have therefore, made our own decision on how to do this based on the size of our school both in terms of rooms, the capacity of those rooms, and the number of students and staff on site. We have cross-referenced our decisions by completing a full risk assessment that will guide re-opening using the WeST Wider Re-opening of Schools Toolkit2.

Plymstock School prides itself on offering a diverse range of educational experiences and activities that a large, secondary school offers but with a small school feel, one in which the student experience is based around high aspirations of learning but also one that provides outstanding care, guidance and support.

Section 1 of the DfE guidance, which covers Public Health advice to minimise coronavirus (COVID-19) risks to Schools now means we no longer need to use rotas as we did for the partial re-opening of Year 10 and 12, where only 25% of students could be on site at any one point in time.

How contacts are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and will (as much as possible) include:

1. grouping children together
2. avoiding contact between groups
3. arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
4. staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

### **The system of controls: Protective measures**

Section 5 of the DfE guidance, which covers prevention, states we need to minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

As a school, we have properly and full considered this and put in place measures that suit our particular circumstances.

The overarching principle that we have been asked to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children and staff. The guidance has stated this once again can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in ‘bubbles’) and through maintaining distance between individuals.

We have therefore put in place the following plans:

### **How we have grouped children**

- In order to maintain distinct groups or ‘bubbles’ that do not mix, our school will be arranged in 5 zones for Years 7 to 11 and then one zone for Post 16 (Years 12 and 13)
- This is an essential requirement by the DfE to make it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible.
- Maintaining consistent groups remains important, but because the DfE guidance stipulates the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, unlike in the partial re-opening for Year 10, we must increase to whole year groups alongside systems for hygiene control.
- Whatever the size of the group, we have put in place measures for them to be kept apart from other groups where possible. There will be some things that remain outside our control, for example siblings in different years and the shared use of public transport means some students will have contact outside of school and the bubbles we operate on site.
- Plymstock School has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to mitigate the risks as much as possible to limit interaction for example, the sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups.
- Our students will be kept in their class groups for the majority of the school day, but will also mix with other groups within their year for specialist teaching. This is to ensure we can meet the expectation that they continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.

### **How we are dividing the School into Groups:**

#### **Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3 – KS3)**

Each year group will be allocated its own zone with each year being split into 3 populations for the bulk of their timetable. The students will not leave their zone and will have allocated break and lunch areas.

#### **Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4 – KS4)**

Each year group will have its own zone. Students will remain in the same classes for the bulk of their timetable except for when option subjects are being delivered. This will enable specialist teaching and in some cases, specialist rooming too.

#### **Post 16 (Key Stage 5 – KS5)**

We will be operating a maximum of 12 classes at any one time. Due to the zoning restrictions imposed by KS3 & KS4 curriculum, KS5 classes will mainly be taught in the science and sixth form area with some other specialist rooming.

## **Tutor Time**

Each zone will have different start times with some tutor time at the start of the day and for others the tutor periods at the end of the day.

## **School Movement to enable teaching and learning**

- In order to ensure we can deliver a full curriculum entitlement, our specialist teachers and other staff will operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable.
- This allowance is different to the guidance at primary because staff need to move between classes and year groups in order for students to access their full curriculum.
- We are mitigating risks to our staff and students in line with this guidance by recommending that teachers stay at the front of the classroom, aiming to maintain 2m from students, with zones marked out in tape.
- This, alongside hand sanitising in the classroom and hygiene measures, should ensure we have taken all reasonable and practicable steps to make the school and each classroom as safe as possible with the minimum of movement and mixing.

## **Preparing for September**

I have attached, with this letter, an updated version of our normal ***Parent Handbook*** and the ***Guide to Communicating with Plymstock School (these refer to our normal way of working whilst COVID-19 measures are not in place)***. This will support Parents and Carers with expectations around uniform and equipment as well as other procedures that are not affected by the change in on site procedures.

## **Break and Lunchtime**

Students will have access to a room at break and at lunchtime where they will be able to eat, as well as an additional allocated outside area, with staggered times to separate them from other year groups.

## **Extra-curricular activities (homework clubs, subject support and sport clubs)**

In the initial phase (the first few weeks), we will not be operating any on site clubs or activities at lunchtime or after school until we have completed a period of induction. We want everyone to feel safe, adjust to the new arrangements and to focus on managing and organising the standard school day.

We are planning a full range of clubs, but each will have to be risk assessed and reviewed as to how we safely re-integrate them. This reintegration will very much depend on the DfE and PHE guidance and the rates of infection. The first phase of after school clubs are most likely to be classroom based and centred on enabling students to attend 'catch up' sessions.

## **Uniform**

Students will be expected to wear normal uniform from September. They will also need to be responsible for having the correct equipment and ensuring that they bring the correct exercise books to each lesson. Students will wear PE kit all of the day in which this is timetabled.

## **Use of the Galley**

Where possible, we encourage you to send your child with a drink, snacks and a packed lunch from home.

Lunch will be provided for students who are eligible for Free School Meals.

We will be operating our Galley (school canteen) to provide students with access to food with a reduced menu that can be pre-ordered.

This is purely a practicable step, as we are unable to carry out the necessary cleaning between each zone accessing the Galley to ensure that all students can have access to food in a timely and fair manner. Secondly, this decision has been taken to minimise queuing and mitigate the risk of a large gathering within a confined space.

We will review this decision in the first stage of re-opening until all students and staff are familiar with the new systems. **Details on this system of pre-ordering will follow from the w/c 24 August.**

## **Visitors**

From September we will be unable to receive any unplanned visitors on site, we will seek alternative meetings where possible using virtual platforms for example MS TEAMS or by telephone. Any planned visits will be arranged by staff with rooms allocated that can ensure social distancing. Understandably, with the additional pressures the creation of zones has placed on schools, rooms are limited and availability restricted.

We will confirm before September how Parents and Carers access reception and the procedures in place to keep both planned visitors and staff safe when entering our site.

## **Attendance**

From September all Parents/Carers will have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child(ren) attends school. Plymstock School recognises for some children this will be a significant challenge and therefore, dedicated school staff will work in partnership with Parents/Carers to ensure all students can return to their full time education and provision.

## **Illness - How will students and teachers be protected?**

No one with Covid-19 symptoms will be allowed on-site. If someone develops symptoms whilst on-site, they will be isolated whilst arrangements are made for them to leave safely and as quickly as possible. If a student is unwell, with normal illness, Parents and Carers should contact the school and follow our normal absence procedures.

## **Student wellbeing and support – Pastoral and Tutor support**

Our central pastoral zone, The HUB, will not be able to operate to fully support student wellbeing and support. Each zone will have its own dedicated Year Team Pastoral HUB. The provision of pastoral support has been planned to:

- support the rebuilding of friendships and social engagement
- address and equip students to respond to issues linked to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- support students with approaches to improving their physical and mental wellbeing
- support for resilience, mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, bereavement and sleep issues
- support for students with additional and complex health needs
- supporting vulnerable children and keeping children safe

## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support**

- Our central SEND area, the DEN, will not be able to fully operate and offer services to all our students in one central location.
- To support students' access to SEND support each zone will have its own dedicated Year Team SEND HUB where the SEN Team Leader will be based.
- Mrs Summers SENCO and her team will write to all Parents and Carers before September to outline how we will be supporting students.

## **Making the journey to and from School**

Where possible, students should continue to walk or cycle to school. If using public transport students will need to follow government guidance on wearing face coverings and any other measures put in place by the transport operators. Single-use face masks need to be disposed of in a bin, whilst re-usable masks need to be kept in a plastic bag inside the student's school bag during the day.

**Changes to Policies:** Our Behaviour and Safeguarding policies have COVID-19 addendums. These will be found on the School Policies section of our school website.

## **Keeping you up to date and informed**

Further specific details will be released from the week commencing **24 August** to students, Parents and Carers using our MyEd Direct Contact App, Show My Homework (SMHW), email, our school website newsfeed. We have also just launched a dedicated page on our school website where you will find everything related to the reopening of school in September – the link is below:

<https://plymstockschool.org.uk/re-opening-september-2020/>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Parents and Carers for your support throughout this period. Your patience and understanding, as well as feedback, has been very much appreciated.

I wish you all a safe summer.

Yours sincerely



Rob Pearsall  
HEADTEACHER

