

28 August 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our policy on face coverings and provide additional information for those who use buses to travel to and from school and who use the canteen.

### **Face Masks**

Recent media coverage and changes in Government advice have resulted in a situation where different schools are implementing different policies in relation to face coverings. Our position has always been that we will follow Public Health England advice and ensure that we are minimising the risks associated with Covid-19 to both staff and children. Our local area is not currently identified as one where transmission of the virus is high. We do feel, however, that the use of face masks during key times within the school day, will provide staff, students and parents with additional confidence with full-reopening of the school from September. We are also a large and busy school where we are maintaining a full curriculum and will have student movement at various times of the day.

Therefore:

1. All children and staff are required to wear a face mask when inside in communal areas e.g. corridors and the sixth form block. The only exception to this is the dining hall, once seated, and when sixth form students are eating or drinking in the sixth form block.
2. Children and staff have the option of wearing a face mask when outside in communal areas e.g. the yard.
3. Children will not wear face masks in classrooms unless there is a specific need identified in an individual risk assessment. Some staff may have visors on during lessons but this will be dictated by our risk assessment.

Please note that some students and staff will not be asked to wear a mask for health reasons. Parents with children in this category should contact their child's Pastoral Leader if this is the case.

To support this decision I ask that you ensure your child brings a face mask to wear in school and has at least one spare in their bag. They should also bring a small plastic bag to allow for safe storage when the mask is removed. Ideally, masks should be made of cloth and able to be washed and reused. This will limit expense to parents and carers. No child will be excluded from school if they do not have a face mask but they should report to their year leader before school for support. We do not have an unlimited number of masks in school.

Students will be given guidance on the safe wearing and removal of masks and use of sanitiser hand gel. This will take place on the first day that they attend school.

### **Scholar Buses**

We are currently in discussions with Gateshead LA and Nexus regarding the number of buses that will be operating when school reopens. Gateshead LA has the legal responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place for children who need to access transport in traveling to and from school.

At present the advice attached here ['preparing your child to travel to school by bus'](#) has been provided by Nexus and the following buses have been timetabled [bus timetable as of September 2020](#) . We are providing Gateshead and Nexus with information relating to what

we believe will be the demand for buses and it might be the case that further buses are scheduled.

We ask all parents and carers, where possible, to make alternative arrangements for their child's travel to and from school. This could include walking or the use of a car, dropping pupils a short walk from school (not directly outside the school gates where unsafe levels of congestion could take place). Where parents and carers cannot do this, we ask that you monitor Nexus travel information via this link <https://www.nexus.org.uk/covid-secure>. We will also provide updated information as soon as we have it.

Parents and carers are reminded that Nexus requires children to wear face masks and have the correct change for any journey.

### **Canteen**

For those students who use the canteen, we have staggered entry and exit times in order that cleaning can take place in between services. However, in order to maintain social distancing, the canteen is running at a reduced capacity. As an alternative choice, pupils may wish to bring a packed lunch or to make a purchase from one of the grab and go outlets at school.

I hope this information provides reassurance to parents, students and staff at this difficult time. We will of course keep decisions under constant review and communicate any changes as soon as practically possible.

Yours sincerely

F Turnbull  
Headteacher