

4 September 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you have been able to enjoy some family time this summer. As we approach the new school year, I am writing with further details about how we will reopen. Inevitably, this letter is quite long but I would ask you to read it all carefully because it contains all the information you and your child need to know about the new term.

Years 7 and 12 return on Monday 7 September

Year 7 will be greeted upon arrival and directed to gather in the small playground. Year 12 should go straight to the Sixth Form Centre.

Years 8 to 13 return on Tuesday 8 September

All students should go straight to tutor rooms on arrival. Some tutor rooms have changed so please check the lists at the end of this letter.

On these days, we will spend time with the students explaining the safety measures we are putting in place and the expectations we have of students in complying with these. Students should arrive for 8.25 am, as usual, and will follow their usual timetables once tutor time and assemblies are finished.

It is important to keep the different year groups apart and so students cannot congregate in groups at the start or end of the college day. Similarly if parents are collecting children from college, please do not enter the college site; instead arrange with your child a sensible meeting point a little distance away from the main exit. Please maintain social distancing whilst waiting.

Keeping everyone safe

We are putting in place a range of safety measures, including:

- ▲ a requirement that people who have any symptoms of Covid-19 or who are unwell stay at home;
- ▲ robust hand and respiratory hygiene;
- ▲ enhanced cleaning arrangements;
- ▲ active engagement with NHS Test and Trace;
- ▲ an extension and strict enforcement of our one-way system;
- ▲ staggered breaks and lunch times to minimise contact between students in different year groups;
- ▲ having different outdoor areas for each year group.

We will need support from parents and students to make this work so please read on to ensure you are aware of all expectations.

Illness

If your child, or anyone in your household or support bubble, has symptoms of coronavirus, it is important that they do not attend College and that they have a test as soon as possible.

The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) 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 3 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.

If your child develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) they must not attend College. Contact the 24 hour absence line on 01803 408841, by 9 am, to report your child's absence from College. It is really important that you state clearly that your child has coronavirus symptoms. Your child's Pastoral Support Manager will contact you to discuss the best way for your child to be tested.

You can find more advice about what to do if your child, or a member of your household has coronavirus symptoms in the enclosed guidance. The guidance also explains what you need to do if your child or a member of your household or support bubble is contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate.

Hygiene measures

Students and staff will be expected to use hand sanitiser on arrival, at the start of every lesson, before break and before lunch. This will be available in every room. Disinfectant spray will be available in every room.

- ▲ All classrooms will be set up so that students all face one way. An additional one way system will be put in place to prevent busy corridors.
- ▲ Extra cleaning is already in place throughout the day and this will continue. Dining areas will be cleaned between each year group's allotted lunchtime. Doors will be kept propped open to reduce the need to touch surfaces.
- ▲ Ventilation will be maximised via open doors and windows.
- ▲ Students will not be permitted to use mobile devices and we are asking them to only bring in equipment that is necessary for their schooling.
- ▲ All departments have risk assessed activities, resources and equipment. Routines of cleaning and quarantining items will be in place.

Face coverings

As you will be aware, the government guidance on face coverings in schools has changed in recent days and this has caused some confusion. Students are still advised **not** to wear a face mask in school. The current guidance now states that face coverings will be mandatory in **busy communal areas** in schools in regions **where local lockdown is being enforced**. It is important to note that this does not extend to classrooms: government guidance is quite clear that the wearing of face coverings in lessons would impede teaching and learning, thus restricting academic progress.

We do not require students to wear face coverings in college. Students who wish to wear a face mask (not scarf, bandana, gas mask etc.) outside of lessons may do so. However, it is the responsibility of the Parent/Carer to ensure their child understands how to put on and remove a mask safely and has the means to store it hygienically during lessons. Any face covering worn must be of a plain design with no logos etc.

Students must remove any face covering at the start of every lesson and store it in a sealed bag. They must sanitise their hands after touching their mask.

If the guidance changes or a local lockdown is enforced, I will, of course, write again with details.

Equipment

To reduce the sharing of equipment, it is important that every student brings in their own stationery. As a minimum, this must include:

- ▲ 2 black pens
- ▲ a pencil
- ▲ a ruler
- ▲ a rubber
- ▲ a pencil sharpener
- ▲ a scientific calculator (these can be purchased through the college at a discounted cost)

Other items such as glue sticks, colouring pencils and a protractor would be helpful.

We will not be in a position to loan PE kits so it is essential that students bring the correct kit on the days when they have PE. The majority of PE will take place outside so please ensure your child arrives with sufficient layers as the weather turns colder.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones are banned from the college site (this applies to all electronic devices, such as games consoles, too). I understand that many parents want their child to carry a mobile phone for the journey to and from school and this is perfectly fine. However mobile phones need to be switched off and in bags from the time your child arrives on the school site (ready for them to clean their hands on entry) and must not be used, seen or heard again until they leave site at the end of the college day.

Uniform

The national lockdown caused some delays with our uniform supplier. This means that the new stock of blazers will not arrive until mid-September. Therefore, students do not have to wear a blazer for the first two weeks of term (of course, if they have one and they wish to wear it, they may do so). With the exception of blazers, students will be expected to be in full uniform from the start of term. Students will be required to wear blazers from 21 September.

Every year in September, we have to address issues with piercings and hair colour. This is an unwelcome distraction at any time but given the amount of work going into reopening the college safely this year, it is even more important that parents and carers support us by ensuring we do not have to address uniform issues alongside everything else. Our uniform policy permits one stud earring per ear only and states that any hair colouring should be of natural shades only. Facial piercings are not permitted and we do not allow students to cover these up with plasters or wear plastic retainers. Therefore please ensure that your child waits until s/he has left compulsory education before allowing them to have facial or body piercings. I issue this reminder every summer and yet every September there is at least one parent who is indignant because I will not make an exception to our long-established rules for their child. Similarly, the line 'we thought it would wash out' can be heard every September as children appear with green, red, blue, pink or purple hair. Please do not wait until the last minute to remove any temporary hair colourings because often this proves more challenging than anticipated. I'm sorry to be so blunt but parental support of rules and expectations is absolutely essential in creating a positive, safe learning environment for everyone.

The Curriculum

The curriculum will continue as normal. We believe it is essential that young people's education is not impacted any more than it has been. Some departments will be amending chosen activities in response to risk-assessments, such as in PE and music, but this will not be to the detriment of the curriculum and all subjects will be timetabled.

Attendance

From September, attendance will once again be mandatory and parents have a duty to ensure their child attends school regularly.

Registration begins at 8.30 am prompt, and so students should be in college by 8.25 am. Students should go straight to their tutor room and not congregate in other areas of the college before the start of the day. The school day ends at 2.50 pm. Students should leave via the nearest stairwell and head home straight away. It is important that students do not congregate outside the college, or elsewhere, because this risks undoing all our efforts to limit contact.

Break and lunch

Break times and lunchtimes will be staggered to maintain the separation of year groups. Year groups will be allocated an indoor servery and an outside space. The Dining Hall and Milk Bar will be cleaned between uses by different year groups. Students will need to use the hand sanitiser provided before purchasing food and before eating.

The Dining Hall biometrics (thumbprint recognition) and PIN codes will be suspended and students will be issued with a proximity card on the first day of term. This card will be read at the top up machines if making cash top ups and at the tills when making purchases. The card will be linked to their existing account so that they can access any credit they already have in the canteen system. Parents are encouraged to use Parent Pay rather than cash to top up their child's lunch account and anyone without a Parent Pay account can apply for one by emailing enquires@thespirescollege.com

The Breakfast Club has been suspended for the time being and the Dining Hall will not be serving food before school.

Transport

The government continues to ask families to avoid public transport where possible. If students do need to travel to college on public transport, they will need to wear a face covering. They should bring a sealable plastic bag to place this in on removal and a clean covering to wear on the journey home. I would suggest having the bags labelled so the used and clean face coverings do not get mixed up. After removing their face covering, students should wash or sanitise their hands immediately.

Student wellbeing

We know that some students have found the past few months particularly challenging but we are also aware that some are feeling anxious about coming into college. We have an extensive pastoral team at the college, who will work with families to support those young people who are struggling.

Behaviour

The college's high expectations of behaviour have not changed. Students will be given clear guidance about expectations at the start of term and any breach of these will be taken very seriously. Detentions will continue as normal but with greater social distancing measures being applied.

Clubs and extra-curricular provision

We know that our extra-curricular opportunities are a really important aspect of the school experience and we are keen to maintain these. However our priority has to be reopening the school safely. Therefore, we are postponing the commencement of clubs for a few weeks. We will then introduce these a few at a time to ensure we can do so safely, starting with the homework support groups. We hope to restart peripatetic music tuition after the October half term holiday. We will keep you updated on our extra-curricular provision as the term progresses.

Parental contact with the college

I am very aware that recent events mean that some year groups' Parents' Evenings could not go ahead. Where this is the case, we have tried to move this year's Parents' Evenings forward. In the interim, there will be the opportunity to meet with your child's tutor to review how they are readjusting to school life. The dates for these evenings are:

Tutor Evenings:

- ▲ Years 9 and 11 Tuesday 20 October 2020
- ▲ Years 8 and 10 Wednesday 21 October 2020
- ▲ Years 7 and Sixth Form Thursday 22 October 2020

Parents Evenings:

- ▲ Year 7 Thursday 22 April 2021
- ▲ Year 8 Thursday 26 November 2021
- ▲ Year 9 Thursday 25 March 2021
- ▲ Year 10 Thursday 28 January 2021
- ▲ Year 11 Thursday 10 December 2020
- ▲ Sixth Form Thursday 14 January 2021

As ever, you will be able to contact your child's tutor, Head of Year or Pastoral Support Manager to discuss your child. Please do not arrive at the college without an appointment because it is unlikely that they will be immediately available and we are not open to visitors.

I hope that this covers everything you need to know. I very much appreciate your support in making the reopening a smooth, efficient process. I am very much looking forward to welcoming your child in September.

With best wishes



Alex Newton
Principal

Tutor Rooms:

Year 7

BCN	Mrs K Bacon-Hughes	2204
GEE	Ms S Gee	1309
HMD	Mrs E Hammond	0820
KEL	Mr D Kelly	2313
KEN	Miss S Kent	1312
LSE	Mrs J Loosemore	1409
MCK	Mrs S MacCormick	1311
RED	Mr R Read	0810

Year 8

BRD	Mr J Bird	1413
BTN	Mr T Britten	1815
FLW	Miss C Fellows	1204
HNS	Mrs M Higginson	1211
HYN	Mr T Hayden	1608
JON	Mr N Jones	1317
PAR	Mr J Parry	2107
QIK {	Mrs S Quick Mrs A Hurrell	0406
WRN	Mr M Warren	1310

Year 9**(SYR is now WDN)**

FAR	Mr R Farr	2216
GNT	Mr C Grant	1203
MAY	Miss N May	1612
MOL	Mr A Mould	2309
NLS	Mr J Nichols	1410
TSD	Miss K Tisdall	2217
TSN	Ms S Toulson	1405
WDN {	Miss H Worden Miss S Steer	1412
WIR	Mr J Willmore	2312

Year 11**(RBS is now LNG)**

CNE	Mrs R Cane	1605
LNG	Mr J Long	1106
PHD	Mr J Pritchard	1313
PNE	Miss A Prince	1103
SMR	Mr J Somers	1710
SPG	Mr R Spearing	0816
WSL	Mr M Wanstall	1305

Year 10**(KBY is now LEP HGS is now ESW)**

COX	Miss J Cox	1205
ESW	Miss H Earnshaw	1811
HAS	Mr A Harris	1604
LEP	Mr P Lee	1606
TMS	Mr J Thomas	0218
TNI	Mr A Toorneini	2310

Sixth Form

BLK	Mr J Blacklock	2311
CLN	Mrs S Collman	1601
DES {	Ms E Deekes Mrs S Peak	0705 2215
EVN	Mr G Evans	0407
MNT {	Mrs H Menhinnitt Miss D Perkins	1416
SCT	Miss C Scott	2305