

4 November 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

re: **Coronavirus / Covid-19 - New National Restrictions from 5 November**

I hope you are well and coping with these unusual times in which we find ourselves. The first half term of the school year seemed to fly by and it was good to see our students starting to settle back into old routines after so long at home. As you will be aware, the country enters a 27 day lockdown from midnight on Thursday morning and so I wanted to write to reassure you about the provision of education during this time.

The Spires College will remain open. Children and young people are permitted to travel for education and teachers and support staff are permitted to travel to work.

We will continue to operate under the risk assessments we have had in place since September and continue to update and adjust these regularly in response to government guidance and local data. We will continue to provide our full curriculum in order to give your child the best education possible, with as many opportunities to broaden their experience as we can safely do at this time.

We continue to require your support in maintaining a safe learning environment. The importance of good ventilation in preventing contagion is becoming increasingly apparent and this forms one of our control measures. This does mean classrooms may be colder than usual during winter months. If your child is feeling the cold, they may wear a white T-shirt or top under their school shirt. There is also a college jumper available via our uniform shop that can be worn underneath a blazer for an extra layer.

A further control measure is the wearing of masks in busy or communal areas. As you may have seen reported, schools are to receive no additional funding to cover the many Covid-19 related costs that they are incurring. Therefore I am very grateful to all the parents that send their child to school with a face mask each day because this removes one financial burden from the college. Please can all parents and carers now ensure that their children bring a clean face mask to school each day?

The other support we require from families is to follow the guidance and legislation. Our staff will continue to come to work and to provide high quality education and pastoral care for all of our students. However it is incumbent on families to avoid anything that unnecessarily increases risk and to remember that it is not only their own health they endanger if they ignore this advice. It is incredibly frustrating to hear of students socialising in groups of more than six outside of college or breaching self-isolation laws, when we are working so hard to keep everyone safe, and the college will report all such activity to the police. From Thursday, students will need to go straight home after college, without meeting friends or socialising at all. They will also need to follow the guidance about staying at home in the evenings and at weekends. Details of what will and will not be permitted can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>.

It is essential that students do not see the fact that schools remain open as an indicator that the rules do not apply to them. This lockdown should lead to a drop in cases and thus allow us to stay open and continue to teach the children in our care. However, this will only work if young people adhere to all of the government rules about what they can and cannot do.

Since March we have restricted visitors to the college. From Thursday, we will only be able to admit visitors on urgent, safeguarding matters. This means that parents will not be able to drop forgotten items into reception or to enter the premises without prior arrangement. I am sorry that this feels austere; I hate the idea of not welcoming parents to our college but I hope you can understand the reasons for this. We do have some Parents' Evenings scheduled for this term and we will have to hold these remotely, as we did for Tutor Evenings. The technology worked quite well for most people on those occasions so I am hoping that we can still provide you with the opportunity to discuss your child's progress with his or her teachers in this way. We will provide further details to the relevant year groups soon. Please do read the guidance that we send carefully; where problems occurred last time, it was often because people had not read the information about how the online platform would work.

Thursday 26 November – Year 8 Parents' Evening

Thursday 10 December – Year 11 Parents' Evening

We will also be holding a virtual Sixth Form Open Evening for Year 11 students and their families on **Wednesday 18 November**. Again, details will be sent out separately.

What to do if your child develops symptoms of Covid 19

Please can I also remind you of what steps to take if your child or a member of your household develops symptoms of Covid-19:

If your child or any member of your household develops symptoms, the whole household should immediately self-isolate. Please inform the college of this information via the usual absence telephone lines.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new, continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

Anyone with symptoms should book a test, which can be accessed via <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test-or-by-calling-119>. If the test result is negative, the household self-isolation can end and those with symptoms can return to school or work once they are feeling better.

If the test result is positive, that person must stay at home for at least 10 days. All other household members who remain well must not leave the house for 14 days. This includes anyone in your 'support bubble'. The 14 day period begins from the day when the first person in the house became ill. Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should only be taken within the home.

Please inform the college of any positive test results by emailing testresult@thespirescollege.com

Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Your child would also be required to self-isolate for 14 days if told to do so by Test and Trace, or by the college, following contact with a positive case. This is not optional and parents face significant fines for breaching this legislation. Again, please inform us of this via the absence phone lines.

I very much hope that over the coming weeks the college can provide all of our students with as much 'normality' as possible at a time when so much in their lives is different.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Newton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alex Newton
Principal