



17th July 2020

Dear parents and carers

Further to the parent update on 5th July, we are writing to give you some more information about our current plans for re-opening to all students in September. We will be refining plans throughout the summer, which means there may be some changes, but the key points outlined in this letter should give you an idea of the kinds of things we will be doing. We will be in touch again in August with the final details.

The overall aim is to balance two factors. On the one hand, we need to take measures to keep staff and students safe, and to exercise our social responsibility to minimise the possible spread of the Covid virus. On the other hand, we want to ensure that we continue to provide a high quality education, including maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum taught by specialist teachers.

Balancing these two aims is not going to be easy; there are difficult trade-offs to be made and contradictions inherent in any model. We also need to bear in mind that we could be living with the virus for a long time, and therefore any new systems we introduce need to be sustainable. The senior leadership team have spent a huge amount of time exploring the pros and cons of various different options, including researching what schools all around the country are doing. Governors have discussed these plans at great length and will continue to scrutinise the relevant risk assessments in preparation for September. Overall, we believe that the balance we have struck is the right one for Lymm High School.

Measures to minimise the transmission of Covid-19

Whilst the incidence of Covid is a lot lower than it was a few weeks ago and the government has deemed it safe to re-open schools, it remains important that we are not complacent about the risks. We will be therefore making a number of significant changes to the way school operates to help prevent the spread of the virus. This will include:

- Operating on the principle of **year group 'bubbles'** whereby we minimise the opportunity for students from different year groups to mix with one another. For example, the school will be split into different zones at lunchtime – one for each year group. The 6th form will generally be considered as one bubble, although we will keep Year 12 and 13 separate where we can.
- Changing the structure of the school day so that there are **fewer lessons**, meaning less movement around the school site, less mixing of students from different year groups and fewer students using any one classroom during the day. The timetable will consist of six lessons lasting 50 minutes each, but the majority of lessons – especially for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 – will be taught in double lessons of 100 minutes.

Headteacher: Mr Gwyn Williams

Lymm High School, Oughtrington Lane, Lymm, WA13 0RB
01925 755458 info@lymmhigh.org.uk www.lymmhigh.org.uk



- **Splitting lunchtime** so that not all students have lunch at the same time. This will allow us to maintain year group bubbles in the canteen as well as providing more space for students to physically distance at lunchtime.
- Changing the rules so that students can take food outside from the **canteen**.
- **Staggering the end of the school day** (see section on timings of the school day) so that Key Stage 3 students leave 5 minutes early, allowing us to reduce the size of gatherings at the end of the day and help to manage bus queues. (N.b. we cannot stagger the start of the school day due to the number of buses we have at LHS, but there is a more natural staggering at this time of day anyway).
- Not holding full **assemblies** or any **extra-curricular activities** for the time being at least.
- Insisting upon proper **hand hygiene**. Students will be expected to wash their hands with warm water and soap regularly as well as to bring their own bottles of hand sanitiser with them to school every day.
- An enhanced **cleaning regime**. For example, all frequently handled surfaces (e.g. toilets, door handles, stair rails and computer keyboards) will be cleaned regularly during the day and there will be additional cleaning at the end of each day.
- The introduction of **one-way systems** around the site to reduce the amount of passing in corridors. Part of this will involve a system whereby students have to walk outside buildings to get to their next lesson wherever possible.
- Changes to the way **practical subjects** operate – for example, activities that use the least amount of equipment that will need cleaning after each use. We are also considering ways of altering arrangements for PE changing to help with physical distancing at this time and allow us to ensure changing rooms are cleaned during the day.
- Insisting on the wearing of face coverings at all times on **school buses**, and asking students to only sit with people from their own year group wherever possible. This is alongside the bus company's other measures for enhanced cleaning.
- Not holding face-to-face meetings with **external visitors** (including parents and carers) unless absolutely essential. Most of these will take place remotely, via Zoom.

Clearly it will not be possible to apply all measures perfectly all the time and, in any case, most people accept that the idea of 'pure' bubbles in secondary schools can never happen. For example, many students live with and/or travel to school together with students in different year groups anyway.

However, it would still be profoundly wrong to fall into the trap of thinking there is no point in doing anything to mitigate the risks of the Covid virus. Therefore, one of our underlying principles is that, just because something cannot be done all of the time, that does not mean we don't do it when we can. So, for example, although it won't be possible to enforce social distancing in lessons, that does not mean we should not be doing it where we can at social times. We are asking for your support as parents and carers in helping to reinforce this message and, taken together, we can make a huge difference in reducing the risks.

Measures to ensure we continue to provide a high quality education

The measures outlined above amount to very significant changes. However, there is little point in re-opening to all students if we cannot provide a good quality education. This includes making sure that our new systems are sustainable and, if necessary, can be employed for the whole year. Therefore, we will also be:

- Trying to keep to our **usual routines and systems** wherever possible. For example, the behaviour system will not change significantly (though there will be serious sanctions for any student silly enough to deliberately take actions that might spread the virus, such as spitting or coughing in the direction of others).
- Allowing students to move between classrooms so that we can still use specialist rooms (such as DT rooms and Science labs). This means we can maintain a **full curriculum offer** for all year groups, with specialist subject teachers for all lessons. It also means that teachers can remain in their own teaching rooms, thus minimising the opportunities for misbehaviour and the lost learning time that would arise if teachers were moving around school and having to set up in a new classroom for each lesson – particularly important on a site the size of ours.
- Keeping **ability sets** where we usually have them.
- Maintaining the full range of support provided by **Student Services**.
- Allowing all students to visit the **canteen** during lunchtime to buy hot food (though please note that the range of food on offer will be reduced, at least at first, and we will be prioritising ‘grab and go’ food to encourage outdoor eating).
- Keeping our usual **uniform**, in line with government guidance about the low risks of doing so.
- Holding **virtual assemblies** to keep students informed of key messages and help maintain our culture and ethos

Term dates and timings of school day

The [term dates](#) for next year will remain the same. However, we do need to stagger the beginning of the year slightly for two reasons. Firstly, new Year 7 students have not had the opportunity for the usual induction day this summer and we want to give them a day in school to start settling in and finding their way around without the older children being around. Secondly, we need some time to test and refine new systems without all 1900 students being back.

Therefore, the first week back will look like this:

Monday 7th September = Years 7 and 12 only in school

Tuesday 8th September = Years 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 in school

Wednesday 9th September = All year groups back in school

A second change we need to make is that the **timings of the school day** will change slightly, as follows:

- Lessons will start at 8.25, which means we expect **students to be in their classroom by 8.20am**. Please note, as explained below, tutor time will no longer be at the beginning of the day and lesson 1 will begin at 8.25. This makes it even more important that students arrive to school in plenty of time.
- Key Stage 3 students will finish at **2.55pm** and Key Stage 4 students at **3pm**. This will allow us to reduce the numbers of students mixing at the front of school at the end of the day. The reason for the slightly shorter school day is that we will be having a shorter lunchtime next year, partly to reduce the opportunity for students to mix with students from other classes and partly because we have had to split lunchtime alongside tutor time (please see [FAQs document](#)).

How parents/carers can help

There is no doubt that September will present some challenges and it is going to be important that we all pull together to make sure everything works well. With this in mind, there are a number of things that parents and carers can do to support us and we would be grateful if you could:

- Make sure you know the symptoms of Covid-19 and are familiar with the latest [government guidance](#). In particular, it is vital that you do not send your child into school if they have symptoms and that you **let school know** so that we can help Public Health England monitor the situation.
- Encourage your child to **walk or cycle** to school. If you have to use a car, please drop your child off further away from school so that we reduce traffic at the front of school.
- Ensure your child has their own **hand sanitiser** with them at all times.
- Ensure your child is familiar with the advice of '[catch it, bin it kill it](#)'.
- If they are taking the bus, make sure your child has a **face covering** and knows how to use this properly.
- Encourage children to exercise **social distancing** when they can.
- **Tell us if your child is especially vulnerable** to the effects of the virus so that we can have a discussion about how we might be able to draw up an individual risk assessment to support you. Please contact your Head of Year as soon as possible if you are in this position (or Mrs Bellers if there are existing medical needs that school already knows about and supports with).

Conclusion

Further details, including a video for students to watch, will be provided towards the end of the summer holidays and Mr Williams will keep a '[Frequently Asked Questions](#)' section of the website updated in the meantime. If you do have any questions that are especially important to you at this stage, please contact the relevant Head of Year or Mr Williams himself.

We trust this letter has provided you with some reassurance about what school will look like in September, even if not every single detail has yet been worked out. Governors are taking our duty to scrutinise all plans and risk assessments very seriously and will continue to do so right up to, and then after, the day schools re-open in September. We feel confident that the measures we are taking provide the right balance between safety and education, and hope that you share our optimism that the next academic year will be a happy and successful one.

Kind regards



Gwyn Williams
Headteacher



Liz Green
Chair of Governors