Dear Parents/Carers

March 2021

We would like to thank you for continuing to work with us over the last weeks/months and for all the support you have provided with remote learning during the period of school closure. It has not been easy for any of us and soon our students will be back where they belong which is in school with their friends and their teachers. We are delighted to be welcoming back our students from 8th March 2021 in a phased return due to the need to offer and carry out Lateral Flow Covid tests.

Following the Prime Minister’s and the Secretary of State for Education’s various announcements, the Department for Education has published guidance on the return to school for all students in March. Please see the summary document for more information.

At this stage and in light of the new guidance we would like to set out some of our considerations in developing our plan for the full opening of school to all students in March. Please read it in conjunction with the updated Safe Return to School documents, which can be found on the website (The School, A Safe Return to School). We appreciate that the information below will most probably raise further questions. It may also be changed if we receive new instructions or guidance from the Government. However, please be assured that the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff is – and will remain – our primary concern.

Attendance

We plan that all students will return to school in full school uniform, from 8th March 2021 onwards in a phased return to allow Lateral Flow Covid testing to take place in that week. Please see the attached schedule and students will receive an individual letter with their time and details on it from Mr Mohsin. All students should arrive at School via the Dawson Road gate at their allocated time and on their allocated date. The only exception to this will be Key Worker children and Vulnerable students who will be in school all week.

Your child should not attend school if they, or someone in their household, displays any coronavirus symptoms. It is imperative that the person displaying coronavirus symptoms has a test immediately. Please advise us of Covid related absence and the outcomes of any household tests via our COVID-19 email address: covidalert@handsworth.bham.sch.uk

If a young person or staff member tests positive for coronavirus we will follow the published Public Health England guidance. Please see the attached DfE/PHE guidance.

Social distancing

We recognise that, in practice, it will be impossible to maintain social distancing at all times, given the nature of our buildings and the numbers of students that may be present. However, there are actions that we will take to maximise social distancing as far as we are able:

• We will arrange classroom furniture to maximise the space between individuals and so that it is front facing. We will also utilise outdoor space for teaching as far as practicable and weather permitting.
• Corridors and communal areas will be marked in two-metre intervals to encourage students to maintain a safe distance from their peers. We will maintain one-way circulation where possible. We are assured that brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk.
• There will be a one-way system in operation in the Dining Room with social distancing in place. There will be a reduced offering of food so that “grab and go” food is available such as sandwiches, wraps, baguettes, and limited hot food. No plates or cutlery will be used. Those students who bring a packed lunch will be asked to eat it outside under the covered areas.

• Entry into the buildings will be staggered at the start of the day. Break and Lunchtimes will be staggered.

• Each Year group will be bubbled as far as is possible and will have their own specific outside space on site.

• There will be a staggered end to the day with Year 10 and 11 leaving at 2.55 pm from the Dawson Road gate. Year 8 and 9 will leave at 3 pm from the Dawson Road gate. Year 7 will leave at 3.05 pm form the Dawson Road gate. The Sixth Form will leave at 3.05 pm from the Front gate. Please note that it is important that all students and parents leave the gate areas of the school as quickly as possible and must not congregate in these areas. There will be no after school clubs, societies or activities for the first three weeks of term due to the need to carry out testing, including the use of the Astro Turf pitch, Learning Hub and playground on the main site.

PPE & Personal Safety

The current Government guidance is clear that students and staff will be required to wear masks inside buildings and especially in corridors and smaller rooms including classrooms. This is due to be reviewed again at Easter by PHE and the DfE. It is not necessary to undergo temperature checks on arrival at school. Please note that students should bring their own masks to use in school and should always carry a spare. Masks will be worn on the bus to and from the playing fields. Please note that any student who is exempt from wearing a mask or face covering (medically etc) will be permitted to not wear a mask or face covering in school. We will have thermometers available should any student feel unwell during the day.

Students will be expected to sanitise their hands thoroughly on arrival and at regular intervals throughout the day. We will have hand sanitiser available in those classrooms and corridors where there are no hand-washing facilities nearby. Students should bring their own hand sanitiser to school for their personal use in addition to that which is provided. We will also expect students to follow the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach. Bins will be emptied regularly during the school day.

Cleaning materials will be available for tables to be cleaned after lessons, breaks and lunchtime. After each school day, the classrooms will be cleaned thoroughly, ready for the next day following an enhanced regime.

We will also keep classes well-ventilated and, where possible and safe to do so, prop open doors both to aid ventilation and to reduce the need to use door handles.

No contact sport will take place until later in the Summer and on days when students have PE and Games lessons they should come to school in their sports kit. On such days, there is no need to bring in school uniform.

Transport

Where possible, students are encouraged to come to school on foot or by bicycle. However, we recognise that this is impossible for many.

• Driving: One parent or carer per family is asked to bring their child to school and pick them up. The school gates will only be open to pedestrians at specific times. Parents are not permitted on the school site. Parents are asked to take responsibility for their own social distancing and respect the wishes of other adults. Please do not try to speak to staff at this time: all parental queries and communication will be managed by email or by phone.

• Public Transport: Students should take appropriate precautions when using public transport as outlined in the relevant Government guidance. It is now mandatory for face masks to be worn on public transport. Please refer to the Transport for West Midlands travel advice as sent out to all parents already and available on the website.
Wellbeing

We are anticipating a range of wellbeing issues associated with the return to school.

- **Returning To 'Normal'** – students and staff are going to take time to readjust. While some cannot wait to be back in school, there will be a significant proportion of students and staff who will take time to make the transition from remote working. We have planned and implemented a Covid – 19 Recovery Plan that will focus upon our teaching and learning from March onwards.

- **Concerns about Academic Progress** – many students will have concerns about their academic progress and what the time lost during the closure will mean for their exams next year. We have just received the full and definitive guidance from Ofqual in outline format about changes to examinations for Summer 2021. A Level and GCSE Exams have been cancelled and grades will be arrived at via Teacher Assessed Grades. Results will be published in the second week of August, which is slightly earlier than usual. We are still waiting on guidance from the various examination Boards such as AQA. It is important to recognise that all children will have had the same disruption and to focus, as far as possible, on what we can control, rather than what we can’t. When we have received all the pertinent guidance we will be in touch with you directly to outline and explain the approach we will be taking.

- **Sense of Loss** – there will be families that have lost loved ones. Others will have gone through financial hardship and will be worried about their jobs and livelihoods in the future. All children will have missed out on time with their friends and extended family and will have seen events, both in school and outside, cancelled.

We will try (within the permitted bounds of social distancing) to bring our community together and to help our students and staff reunite and heal.

We would like to thank you in advance for your support and patience as we prepare once again for the managed full re-opening of the school. We will involve all our staff in carefully planning a safe, nurtured and smooth transition back to school. We appreciate that this will not fully resemble regular school life, yet. Nevertheless, we will do everything we can to ensure our students feel happy, secure and supported through these unusual times.

We will be adopting the same cautious, calm and measured approach as we have done to date. All DfE and PHE guidance is being followed with PPE available on site, social distancing measures in place where possible and health and safety being paramount at all times. The above will feed into our Covid recovery plan for March and beyond. Please visit our website at [www.handsworth.bham.sch.uk](http://www.handsworth.bham.sch.uk) and go to The School, A Safe Return to School for further details and guidance.

We look forward to seeing you all soon.

Stay well.

With my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr SN Bird

Headmaster