

15 July 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

I hope this letter finds you and your child well as we come to the end of an academic year like no other. We are delighted that a fair degree of normality is set to return in September in that we can invite all students back, and therefore we very much look forward to welcoming your son or daughter to QEHS then.

Arrangements for September

The first annex to this letter provides you with key details about what the full return in September will look like from a safety and logistical standpoint, in light of the Government's guidance to schools on full opening. A phased return is planned, as per the details below. This is not dissimilar to our usual arrangements at the start of a new school year, but this year it is particularly necessary in order to build student and staff familiarity with new arrangements that need to be in place and to give confidence to parents and carers that you can send your child in safely.

Start days for the different year groups are:

Wednesday 2 September: **Year 9** return

Thursday 3 September: **Year 11** return, along with year 9

Friday 4 September: **Years 10, 12 and 13** return, along with years 9 and 11,
(**year 12** in from lunchtime)

I will write to you again towards the end of August with more details of these days, specific timings and of the safety measures that will be in place, including arrangements for those getting school transport.

Attendance in September

The Government is clear that it expects all students to return to school unless individuals are complying with clinical and/or public health advice or another statutory reason applies. For parents and carers of children able to come to school but who are anxious about this, please do get in touch via pastoral@qehs.net in the last week of the holidays so we can talk through your concerns. The full details of the Government's guidance around attendance, including for those shielding or self-isolating, are contained in Annex 2 to this letter.

Staffing

Some of you may be aware that our previous Head of School, Mr Andriot, took up a substantive headship role at another school in June. I am very pleased to tell you that we have appointed Mr Neil Seaton as Mr Andriot's successor. Mr Seaton, currently a deputy headteacher at George Heriot's School in Edinburgh, graduated in History and Politics from the University of Edinburgh before qualifying as a teacher. He has a passion for inclusion of all students and led his current school to be

a UNICEF rights-respecting school. He was attracted by our ethos and the exciting opportunities of the new build. Mr Seaton, who was delighted to accept the post, will join us in January.

In other developments, I am pleased to report that Mrs Innes has been appointed Acting Deputy Headteacher from September and Ms Edgar appointed as Pastoral Leader for Year 10, replacing Ms Curry who takes up post as a senior leader at Hexham Middle School.

As mentioned, I shall write to you again towards the end of August. In the meantime, I hope all is well with you and your loved ones and I wish you and them an enjoyable and safe summer.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Atkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Graeme Atkins
Executive Headteacher

ANNEX 1

Queen Elizabeth High School September 2020 - Full Opening

Key features

We will:

- Have all students back
- Operate our full timetable ensuring all students get full teaching time
- Adhere to the Government [guidance](#), complying with the seven elements of the [system of controls](#)
- Manage students in year group bubbles in accordance with the guidance
- Make changes to arrival times and mustering points to ensure bubbles are separate but without adverse impact on those using school transport – we'll specify these details in August
- Direct students to use specific routes and entry/exit points to avoid congestion
- Stagger break and lunch times to avoid congestion and bubble mixing – see timetable of school day below
- Stagger departure times but without adverse impact on those using school transport – see timetable of school day
- Adjust classrooms layouts where necessary to align with the guidance on seating arrangements
- Provide additional cleaning in accordance with the guidance
- Provide additional handwashing facilities at key entry points
- Ensure that student hand cleaning occurs via sanitisers in every classroom and at other key points

Compromises required to make full return work

To make full return work within the guidance, there are certain compromises required, which are:

- One y9 lesson and one y10 lesson will be split each day, either side of a break or lunch. In normal circumstances this would not be ideal. However, in order to achieve the bigger prize of full return/full curriculum/full teaching time, whilst adhering to the public health guidance, it is a relatively small, manageable price to pay.
- To fit in the split lunches in a way that works in terms of various other requirements, lunch time for each year group will reduce to 30 minutes. Again, this is not ideal in that it reduces students' socialising time, but is a necessary adjustment that allows for other critical requirements to be met. Lunch will be later for students in years 11 and 12 than would ordinarily be the case. We will make sure they are aware of this and will enable them to get food at break time.
- To enable a staggered departure to avoid congestion moving through the building, and as a result of the shorter lunch period, p5 will end for students in years 9, 10 and 12 at 3.10pm. Those getting school transport will congregate in their bubbles in a designated area until pick-up. We will add 10 minutes onto p5 for years 11 and 13 (it will finish for these year groups at 3.20pm as it does now, but given the shorter lunchtime, this will mean 10 minutes more than for years 9, 10 and 12).

Timetable/Schedule of the day

	08:50	09:00	09:10	09:20	09:30	09:40	09:50	10:00	10:10	10:20	10:30	10:40	10:50	11:00	11:10	11:20	11:30	11:40	11:50	12:00	12:10	12:20	12:30	12:40	12:50	13:00	13:10	13:20	13:30	13:40	13:50	14:00	14:10	14:20	14:30	14:40	14:50	15:00	15:10	15:20				
9	Reg			P1			P2	Break		P2						P3				Lunch																								
10	Reg			P1			Break			P2										P4																								
11	Reg			P1						P2					Break					P3																								
12				P1			Break			P2										P3																								
13				P1						P2					Break					P3																								
																																												Departure

Students in Years 12 and 13 to arrive by 9.15am ready for P1 at 9.20am (those arriving by bus can be based in the sixth form area or the LRC until P1 starts)

Phased return

A phased return will be necessary to build student and staff familiarity with the new arrangements and to give confidence to parents that they can send their children in safely.

Tuesday 1 September – Staff training day

Wednesday 2 September – Year 9 return

Thursday 3 September – Year 11 return, along with year 9

Friday 4 September – Years 10 and 13 return, along with years 9 and 11, with year 12 in pm.

More details

We will write to parents in late August to confirm these arrangements and to clarify any other necessary detail. Please note, a full planning document and associated risk assessment have been prepared, covering all aspects of the Government's guidance on full opening.

ANNEX 2

Excerpt from Department for Education [guidance](#) on full opening of schools

ATTENDANCE

Attendance expectations

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity (as set out in the section below).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).