



23rd October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Please excuse the length of this letter.

Proposed temporary changes to school day timings and compulsory wearing of face coverings (during the Covid-19 situation) from Monday, 9th November 2020

1. Temporary changes to school day timings

As we approach half term, we have been reviewing how things have gone under our temporary arrangements at school during the Covid-19 situation. I would like to congratulate the students and staff for adapting so well to this challenging situation and thank you, our parents and carers, for your excellent support. Over time, we have gradually evolved arrangements, for example, allowing students to make their own way to lessons within their bubble area, rather than having to walk to and from their bubble area, whilst at the same time ensuring maximum staff supervision to ensure students are safe and behaviour is exemplary.

As you are aware, ensuring the safety of our staff and students, is our number one priority. We also want to ensure that our students experience the best-possible education at this time. We recognise that the Covid-19 situation is becoming more serious nationally and locally with four confirmed cases having occurred within our school community. The weather will definitely deteriorate between November and March, meaning that students will have to spend more breaktimes and lunchtimes inside the enclosed space of their homebase areas.

We have carefully reviewed how much time students need to eat (whether purchasing hot food or consuming their own sandwiches at lunchtime), use the toilet facilities and have some down time at break time and lunch time and we believe we can slightly reduce these parts of the school day without adversely affecting students' experiences.

We would therefore like to make some temporary changes to the timings of the school day from Monday 9th November. The main goal of these changes is to slightly reduce the amount of time each whole year group bubble is together at breaktimes and lunchtimes and to try to make the length of lessons across the day more similar to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

We have consulted our staff about these minor changes and they are in support of what we have proposed.

What we are now proposing to be introduced from Monday 9th November is as follows:

- **A reduction in form time by 5 minutes** on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays as we think there will be sufficient form time with this slight reduction.
- **The creation of form time on Wednesdays** so that students have daily contact with their form tutor to enhance their wellbeing. This is also essential to enhance health and safety for fire/other evacuations as it helps greatly if the form tutor has contact with students each morning and is, therefore, aware who was absent at the start of the day.
- **A reduction in break time by 5 minutes to 15 minutes** but with a 5 minute movement bell before and after and **a reduction in lunchtime to 35 minutes**, with a 5 minute movement bell either side, to allow staff and students a full 35 minute lunch break (currently lunch is 45 minutes but with a 5 minute movement bell at the start which in effect reduces lunchtime to around 40 minutes).

This reduction in the length of lunchtime and breaktime will slightly reduce the length of time students are spending together in home bases. More toilets are also being hired for Year 8 and Year 9 students.

- **More equality of lesson times throughout the school day and week** with all lessons now being 50-60 minutes to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Our current temporary timetable has some lessons of 40 minutes, which we are finding too short to be fully effective.
- The 10 minutes saved from reducing the length of break and lunch will mean the **school day finishes 10 minutes earlier than currently on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and at the same time as currently on Wednesday.** Any student who cannot leave at this new temporary finishing time on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday because their parent/carer wants to collect them at our current finishing time, will be able to remain on site until the current finishing time.

2. Compulsory wearing of face coverings (during the Covid-19 situation)

A few weeks ago, we informed you that the School was strongly encouraging students to wear face coverings on the school site. There has been a mixed response to this, with relatively small numbers of students wearing face coverings, even though we believe most students are bringing a face covering to school. We are aware that peer group pressure may be influencing some students' behaviour in this respect.

Government guidance states: "Schools that teach children in Years 7 and above and which are not under specific local restriction measures, will have the discretion to require face coverings for pupils, staff and visitors in areas outside the classroom where social distancing cannot easily be maintained, such as corridors and communal areas and it has been deemed appropriate in those circumstances".

The design of our school and the number of students we have in year group bubbles, means that social distancing cannot be easily achieved in our school.

We also note that the wearing of face coverings is expected in many settings outside of school such as in shops, GP surgeries and on public transport and that students will therefore be used to wearing face coverings.

The Government guidance on face coverings clearly states that: "Coronavirus (COVID-19) usually spreads by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking. These droplets can also be picked up from surfaces, if you touch a surface and then your face without washing your hands first. This is why social distancing, regular hand hygiene, and covering coughs and sneezes is so important in controlling the spread of the virus. **The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of coronavirus droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.** Because face coverings are mainly intended to protect others, not the wearer, from coronavirus (COVID-19) they are not a replacement for social distancing and regular hand washing".

Given all of the aforementioned factors, with effect from Monday 9th November we are going to ask all of our students, staff and visitors to wear face coverings.

Students will be asked to wear face coverings:

- as they enter the home base area/building at the start of the day.
- when walking to and from lessons. (They will be optional in lessons).
- when queuing for lunch.

- in the internal home bases at break and lunch when not eating and drinking.
- after lesson 5 until they leave the building.

Students will not be expected to wear face coverings:

- when they are outside at break and lunch.
- when they are eating lunch in the dining hall.

Parents/carers of any students who are exempt from wearing face coverings should please email their child's Progress Leader, briefly explaining the reasons why.

Students must wear a plain colour face covering made from a material that is comfortable and breathable, such as cotton. Bandanas, scarves or face masks with lettering and logos should not be worn. Face coverings must be worn appropriately. Students must bring a clear plastic bag to place the face covering in, when it is not being worn (for example, if they choose to remove it during lessons). Disposable face coverings can be worn. We will provide bins for the safe disposal of these. Please note- the School will not be providing face coverings for students. We hope you encourage your child to wear a mask as this will help to enhance the safety of all. We will contact the parent/carer of any student who is not wearing one.

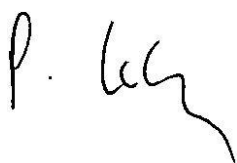
Students who choose to wear face coverings inappropriately will be subject to sanctions as indicated in the addendum to our Behaviour Policy which we established at the start of this term. We are asking parents/carers to ensure that face coverings are washed regularly please. (They can be hand washed in warm, soapy water).

We accept that our parents/carers may have different views on the wearing of face coverings, but we are asking for your full support on this matter. Thank you.

If you have any feedback or questions on any of these proposed developments, please do not hesitate to contact the School on the contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk email address by the end of Monday, 2nd November.

Thank you for your on-going support at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,



P. Kelly
Headteacher