



SPALDING GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Priory Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 2XH

T: 01775 765800 F: 01775 765801

W: www.spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk

E: enquiries@spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk

Headmaster: S M Wilkinson BSc

Dear Parents

As you will know, it is the Government's intention that all students will return to school, full-time, from the start of the new academic year, beginning on 1 September. On 2 July, they published their guidance for secondary schools, which can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>. Since then, the School has been working on what that guidance will look like, in practice, for us. I am writing to you now to set out how the School will

operate from 1 September. Please bear in mind that the Government has indicated it will declare a final position on returning to school, on 11 August; additionally, its guidance (and hence our approach) may change, both before and after that date – if it does, then I shall write again to inform you of any substantial changes. Do please also keep an eye on the 'School Communication' section of the website, where all information will also be posted.

I shall be glad to welcome students back to school once again; however, I recognise that for many – students, parents and staff – the thought of suddenly being immersed, once again, in a community of 1000 people, brings with it some anxiety. I hope that the information presented here goes some way to relieving that anxiety. Although our plans must facilitate education, given the amount of school time that has been missed, they have been formulated with safety and wellbeing in mind.

Bubbles

Essentially, the School will be separated into seven Year group bubbles and each bubble will have its own suite of rooms within the buildings. The key features of our arrangements are as follows:

- Each Year group will have a zone, and those zones will be separated from others by means of barriers and clear signage, with only members of staff moving between zones; every room in a zone will be clearly marked as such, with no entry permitted to any student from outside the Year group occupying that zone
- Year 7 will have a suite of five rooms (Zone 1), including a Science lab and a Technology room. Each of the five teaching groups will remain in a specified room, although some shifting day-by-day may happen to facilitate each group having access to the two specialist rooms
- Years 8 and 9 will alternate between Zones 2 and 3, a fortnight at a time in each zone. Zone 2 only contains basic classrooms, whereas Zone 3 contains two Science labs and a Technology lab. This way, both Year groups will have access to, in particular, Science labs, which it has not been physically possible to create in each zone
- In Key Stage 3, students are either taught in five teaching groups, or they are split into two half-Year bands with three sets in each. In order to help minimise mixing within bubbles, banding for this year in Years 8 and 9 has been organised with two-and-a-half of the original five teaching groups in each band – essentially creating half-Year bubbles
- Years 10 and 11 will alternate between Zones 4 and 5, a fortnight at a time in each zone. Zone 4 only contains basic classrooms, whereas Zone 5 contains two Science labs. This way, both Year groups will have access to those labs
- Years 12 and 13 will alternate between Zones 6 and 7, a fortnight at a time in each zone. Zone 6 only contains basic classrooms, whereas Zone 7 contains two Science labs and an Art Studio. This way, both Year groups will have access to those specialist facilities. Zone 6 will have access to the Coffee Shop and the Sixth Form Study Centre; Zone 7 will have access only the Atrium (which will not be available to anyone else), where students will have to balance both Private Study and free time.
- Under these arrangements, students can be taught in the same groups as they would have been (and will be again) had circumstances been normal

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- Each zone will have its own toilets available which should be used by students at all times. Students in Years 10 and 11 will also have access to the shared toilet facility (see 'Shared Spaces', Below) at break and lunch times
- Each bubble will have its own recreational space; however, some recreational spaces are adjacent to one another, but will be separated by barriers

Specialist Rooms

It is important, if students are going to be able to benefit fully from the curriculum, that we provide as much access as possible to the specialist teaching rooms that are required by some departments. As mentioned above, students will have access to Science laboratories as part of the zoning arrangements. It has been possible in our planning to keep one of the Art Studios (and the second, every other fortnight), both Music rooms, two of the Technology workshops, and the PE facilities as 'neutral' zones – and those departments are currently working on their own risk assessments as to how students can safely access those resources.

Shared Spaces

As well as those specialist rooms mentioned above, there are two other areas of the School site that will operate on a shared basis; that is, they can be accessed during the day by students from different bubbles. They are:

- The Dining Hall – see 'Food and Catering', below;
- The main boys' toilet block – which will be accessible from the external door only, that door being monitored by Prefects who will restrict the number of students in there at any given time. See also 'Cleaning and Hygiene', below.

Sharing of Resources

For those departments who issue individual copies of textbooks to students, that will operate as normal. For those where students would usually share copies of textbooks, although resources can be shared within bubbles, provided there is meticulous cleaning, our intention is to avoid that as much as possible, and textbook page will, where possible, either be available for students to access online in lessons or will be projected onto classroom boards.

Students must not share resources between themselves – there can be no "borrowing a pencil", for example. It is important that students remember, therefore, to bring all necessary equipment with them into school each day, and sanctions will apply to those who do not. I remind you that the School offers a reasonably priced stationery bundle, which can be sourced through the 'Shop' facility in ParentMail.

Transport to School

Wherever possible, students should either walk, cycle, or be delivered by car to school. In many cases, I know that this will not be possible and students will need to rely on public transport. The School is in liaison with the Local Authority on the matter of bus transport to school, as responsibility ultimately lies with them. At the time of writing, they are still awaiting their own specific Government guidance; however, they have undertaken to look into a couple of matters over the summer:

- Possible adjustment to departure times at the end of the day, to enable us to facilitate a slower, safer, departure from the school site;
- Possible re-routing of the contract buses such that Grammar School students will be picked up on a street adjacent to the School rather than having to walk to the Bus Station.

The Local Authority has also stated that when bus passes are sent out to parents, they will include an additional paragraph regarding face coverings and other information they feel parents might need to know, in accordance with the guidance they will receive in due course.

The School will also be liaising with providers of private coach transport to ensure that we are happy with the provisions they are making; again, however, until the sector receives its specific guidance, there is no information to share. I am confident, however, that the travel companies will do their best to ensure student safety.

Gates and Entrances

Although there are many gated entrances to the School site, we have decided to restrict entry and exit to the two gates that we would use under normal circumstances – those being the Priory Road gate and the St Thomas' Road gate. Rather than create the inevitable crossing on pavements around the School by students from different bubbles if we specify certain gates for certain Year groups, it will be easier to manage the flow and separation of students once through the gates, when access is restricted to just two. Having come through the gates, students will have very clear paths to follow in order to get to their zone.

Timings of the Day

Although the Government guidance allows for the staggering of the starts and ends of the day, that will not be practicable (on a large scale) for our school, where a great many students travel a great distance and are reliant on bus and other public transport schedules. That said, we shall be making some minor adjustments within the day to allow for a slight staggering of dismissal at the end of the day. Days will run as follows:

School begins	8.50 am
Period 1	8.55 am
Period 2	9.45 am
Tutor Period	10.35 am
Break	11.00 am
Period 3	11.20 am
Period 4	12.10 pm
Lunch	1.00 pm
Period 5	1.35 pm
Period 6	2.25 pm
End of day (Y7)	3.15 pm
End of Day (Y8-9)	3.20 pm
End of day (Y10-11)	3.25 pm
End of Day (Sixth)	3.30 pm

Days 1 and 2

We have decided, on this occasion, to reinstate our former arrangements where a limited number of Year groups attend on Day 1, with the rest not returning until Day 2. That will allow us to prioritise those who have public examinations this year, provide a period of induction to those who are new to the School, and be able to stagger student safety briefings across a couple of days. As such:

- Years 7, 11, 12 and 13 will return to school on Thursday 3 September
- Years 8, 9 and 10 will return on Friday 4 September

Pastoral Structure

Given the requirement to maintain Year group bubbles, our vertical tutoring system cannot operate, as that would mean mixing students from different bubbles. We have, therefore, taken the decision to suspend the vertical arrangements and use a horizontal system instead. As a result, Tutor groups will contain only students from the same Year and will be based largely on teaching groups, where that is possible. To facilitate and support the new arrangements, the Heads of House will switch to Heads of Year, as follows:

Year 7	Mrs A J Johnson
Year 8	Mrs A-M W Durno
Year 9	Mrs E V Donnelly
Year 10	Mr J Wyvill
Year 11	Mr C S Crane
Sixth Form	Dr A M Leadbeater Mr D K Simpson

Food and Catering

The School will not be providing a general catering service in September and so parents should send their children to school with sufficient food and drink (note that the school water fountains will not be operational) to last them the day. A limited service will be available to Sixth Form Students, in the Coffee Shop and Atrium; Sixth Form students will not be allowed to leave the site at lunchtime. We will provide catering for those entitled to free school meals – such food will need to be ordered in advance, and the method by which this should happen will be communicated separately, via ParentMail, in due course. That food will be eaten in the Dining Hall, where separate areas for each bubble will be set up. We will be suspending our fingerprint system and Catering staff will use the 'lookup' facility at the tills; parents will only be able to add money to a student's account via ParentMail – the cash top-up machine in school will not be available.

Cleaning and Hygiene

The best way to prevent the spread of the virus remains high levels of personal hygiene – ensuring that hands are washed regularly, especially after visiting the toilet and before and after eating; and ensuring adherence to the “Catch It, Bin It, Kill It” campaign. The School will set up a number of ‘Sanitation Stations’, where hand sanitiser will be available and its use expected, especially at the start and end of the day.

The School will be providing supplementary cleaning to give a greater coverage during the day, such that facilities – in particular, shared areas and toilets – are cleaned regularly during the day, rather than just at the end. Additionally, thorough cleaning will take place across the whole school at the end of each day, in readiness for the next.

Attendance

The Government has made it clear that attendance at school will again become compulsory from 1 September, and that sanctions against non-attendance can operate. The only COVID-related absence that will be authorised is as a result of being required (as distinct from choosing) to isolate, either on an individual basis or as part of a group or if a student lives in an area that goes into local lockdown.

Uniform

Uniform, once again as specified in the Government guidance, will be compulsory and the usual school dress code will apply fully.

Facemasks

At present, the Government guidance is that face coverings are not required in school settings. My concerns over face coverings are fourfold:

- They are uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time, which is likely to result in distracting and unhygienic ‘fiddling’;
- Students will not maintain their ‘security’; for example, by putting fingers inside the mask to rub/scratch faces;
- Students will not effectively manage the process of removal and reapplication when it comes to eating, which will render the covering useless;
- They prevent barriers to effective communication between students and staff, which could impact on learning.

For these reasons, and for as long as the guidance remains that we should not, the School’s position is that students will not wear face coverings during the school day. This does not impact on those who need to wear them on journeys to and from school; those students will be asked to remove coverings at the gate.

Assessment, Marking and Feedback

In order to meet with the requirement that shared resources should be meticulously cleaned or left for at least 48 hours, we will need to adopt changes to our marking policy, as it is no longer practicably possible for a teacher to collect a set of exercise books and mark them. As such:

- Classwork will be self-marked or, where appropriate, peer-marked;
- Homework and some assessments will be completed and marked via online methods (see also ‘Remote Learning and Microsoft Teams’, below);
- Only CATs and formal examinations will be collected in and marked. In these cases, the work will be collected, left for 48 hours, marked, and then left for a further 48 hours before return.

Additional Needs Support

Given the requirement for members of staff to (generally) maintain a 2m distance from students, having a Teaching Assistant as an additional adult in a classroom is potentially going to prove logistically difficult. In consequence we shall have to think slightly differently about how we provide Additional Needs support to those who need it. Mrs Lutton is working on the details and will contact those necessary parents separately.

Behaviour and COVID-specific Sanctions

The fundamental position is that the School’s current Behaviour Policy has not changed and will be applied as usual. Additionally, we have incorporated some COVID-specific points, which can be found as an addendum to the Behaviour Policy on the school website, at

<https://www.spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1397&type=pdf>.

Remote Learning and Microsoft Teams

Before lockdown, the School was looking at incorporating the use of Microsoft Teams into its practices – it is a platform that forms part of the Microsoft Office 365 suite that the School already has, and it had already begun to demonstrate its potential in a couple of subjects who were ‘ahead of the game’ and trailblazing its use. Lockdown has forced our hand a little, and we have had to become familiar with the use of Teams perhaps quicker than we intended. I am pleased that we have – it is an immensely powerful tool and one which is only going to grow in its prominence in our daily life in school. As well as the possibility that we shall need to rely on it again in response to some degree of local lockdown, or to support individuals needing to isolate, many departments have resources on there which will be used during school in order to avoid the need to share out textbooks, for example. All students, through their school accounts, have access to the software; however, it is important that students have the hardware available to access it effectively, through a keyboard device or tablet (rather than a phone) at home.

Lockers

The constraints of the bubble system, given that lockers are not evenly distributed around the School nor can they be, together with the additional risk of contaminated surfaces, means that we have suspended access to lockers from September. Although students will not have access to a locker, they will be able to carry a bag during the day – the limited movement, and only within Year groups, minimises those risks associated with carrying bags in normal times. Locker hire will not form part of this year’s Ancillary Items payment.

Arrival and Departure at Non-Standard Times

In line with our usual position, I would ask that students do not take time away from school in order to attend medical appointments. Where this is necessary, please ensure that appointments are either at the beginning or the end of the day – students should not be leaving the school site, attending elsewhere, and then returning to school. Any student who is arriving at school at a non-standard time should use the North Door to access the building – that will provide a neutral, non-zoned route to Reception.

Parental Access to School

We are committed to maintaining strong communication with parents; however, our processes will have to be adjusted in September. There are some occasions when parents are invited, *en masse*, into school – for example, Progress Evenings. Such events are not going to be possible, under current guidance; however, we are investigating the potential of hosting Progress Evening appointments remotely and will contact parents of the relevant Year groups in due course. General access to the School needs to be restricted and parents must not just turn up, *ad hoc*, hoping to speak to someone. Access to the School site will be by appointment only; however, in order to minimise the exposure of staff to other people, those appointments will only be given in the most necessary of circumstances. Do please refer to the Communications Policy (<https://www.spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1404&type=pdf>), which gives guidance on the best way to make contact with the School, such that effective communication between home and school can continue in these circumstances.

In order to make these arrangements work, we will be increasing the amount of staff presence around the School during the day; however, ultimately, the success of this and the mitigation of risk lies with the students, and I would be grateful for the support of parents in reinforcing with their children the importance of adhering strictly to the School’s procedures.

I look forward to welcoming students back in September; I wish you a safe and happy break in the meantime.

Yours sincerely



S M Wilkinson
Headmaster