

# New Forest Care

## Education



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to provide all parents/carers with an update on the re-opening of New Forest School following the summer break, particularly in relation to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We have obviously been tracking the national situation closely over the initial part of the summer holidays and also keeping abreast of updates provided by the Department for Education.

The latest government guidance continues to expect that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term. This is something that we welcome at New Forest School as the COVID-19 restrictions certainly impact heavily on our student's education, wellbeing and wider development.

In order to do so safely and in line with government guidance we are adhering to the following measures and procedures as published by the Department for Education.

### Essential Measures:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

In order to ensure these measures are in place, the Department for Education has provided the following guidance:

### Prevention:

Schools should:

- 1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- 2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- 5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

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Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.

### Response to any infection:

Schools should:

- 7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- 8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community
- 9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

## New Forest School Operating Procedures

Much of the guidance published by the Department for education refers to Mainstream Primary and Secondary schools in relation to class, year group and school sizes.

As a small, split site SEN school we have had to interpret the guidance to fit our particular setting. This has been undertaken in conjunction with the Director of Education, Director of Care and our Registered Mental Health Nurse (who has played a critical role in overseeing New Forest School's response to the COVID-19 pandemic).

At this stage it seems incredibly unlikely that any major changes to the government and/or Department for Education advice and guidance will change before the start of the new term. As such our intention is to re-open as follows:

### Autumn Term Dates

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September</b> | INSET Day                                |
| <b>Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September</b>   | INSET Day                                |
| <b>Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September</b>   | All students return                      |
| <b>Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October</b>    | Last day before Autumn half term holiday |
| <b>Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November</b>    | INSET Day                                |
| <b>Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November</b>   | All students return                      |
| <b>Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December</b>   | Last day before Christmas holidays       |

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The decision to take two INSET days at the start of term is based on three key factors.

Firstly, the need for education staff to regroup following being dispersed throughout lockdown and undertake/update key statutory training which was not possible during lockdown.

Secondly, the need to prepare sites for our revised COVID-19 operation and return classrooms and curriculum areas to normal use following their use during lock down for multi-subject use as bases for the lock down bubbles.

Thirdly, consideration of the impact on students returning for a single day on the Friday and then going straight into a weekend.

### Day to Day Running of the Timetable

Our plan is to return to a more normal timetable from 7<sup>th</sup> September with students returning to:

- a) their normal class groups with their tutor,
- b) being based on their normal school site,
- c) returning to moving between classrooms to be taught by subject specialists in their subject specific classrooms.

To achieve this safely, we will be operating with 3 'bubbles'.

1. Totton Site.
2. Fawley/Lunedale Site.
3. Key Stage 2 (Fawley).

No one 'bubble' has more than 30 students attending which puts it in a similar category to a class group in a mainstream primary or secondary school when viewing the Department for Education guidance.

In addition, we are putting further measures in place to further safeguard students and staff as follows:

1. Shared locations (school farm, outdoor learning centre and our new construction hub) will only be accessed by Year 10/11 exam groups. This reduces strain on these areas allowing for sufficient cleaning of the spaces and equipment between use to minimise risk of cross contamination between sites/bubbles.
2. Education staff who ordinarily work across sites are limited to one site/bubble to reduce risk of cross contamination between sites/bubbles. Where teachers will now not be available to teach on other sites we have been able to timetable/recruit other experienced/specialist teachers to deliver the subject on the other site. In the case of languages we will be utilising a live video link between sites/bubbles for the teacher to continue delivering their subject.
3. PE and Outdoor Education lessons due to be run at offsite facilities will only take place outside, utilising our own equipment initially (this may be reviewed as the term progresses and weather changes).

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4. Visitors to the school (external professionals and/or contractors) will be kept to a minimum, where possible outside of the hours students are attending and use of PPE will be required.
5. Large gatherings within bubbles, for example assemblies, will be avoided and content delivered to individual class groups.
6. Expectations that parents, carers and transport staff wait and collect students from outside the school buildings and adhere to social distancing. Education staff will conduct the usual verbal handover outside wherever weather conditions allow rather than having small groups of adults and students congregating within the reception areas.
7. Our enhanced cleaning rota from the lockdown period will remain in place.
8. Class desks, PC keyboards/mice will be wiped down between lessons/use.
9. Specialist equipment (for example in Food technology, DT rooms, Music etc) will be cleaned down between use.
10. Students will be reminded and provided opportunity for regular handwashing and have access to hand sanitiser.
11. Students will be reminded and encouraged to follow the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' advice for good respiratory hygiene and appropriate resources will be in place within classrooms.
12. Strict procedures are in place for any student or staff member that starts to show symptoms whilst attending school including facilities to isolate from all other students/staff, PPE for any staff member required to support a student until they are able to return home. This includes a procedure for alerting parents/carers of students within the class group and school site bubble as required.
13. Procedures are in place to notify parents/carers, our own health team and Public Health England (as required by Department for education guidance) in the event of any confirmed cases of COVID-19.
14. Full engagement of the school in Track and Trace procedures.
15. Expectations that both students and staff follow social distancing measures within the classroom and whole school site wherever practical/possible without reducing the support students require.
16. Specific COVID-19 training for all education staff during our INSET days (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> September).

Our hope is that by following these operating procedures we are able to allow students to return to as normal a timetable, school day and curriculum as possible. This allows us to meet our aim (echoed by Department for Education expectations) that:

- all pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- the curriculum remains broad and ambitious: all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.

## Face Masks

This week we have seen changing guidance on face masks. Currently it seems that face masks will be compulsory in schools as students move around the school site but NOT compulsory when they are in class.

Due to two main reasons, we are not making use of face masks compulsory when moving between class rooms:

1. The total number of students within any one of our bubbles/sites is less than a mainstream class group,
2. Additional guidance for SEN school states that students with particular needs are not required to wear face masks.

Instead, we are making the use of face masks optional within school and do not intend to enforce their use at this time. We are aware that some students may wish to use face masks moving between lessons to alleviate their anxieties whilst other students may struggle to use face masks moving between lessons due to sensory needs.

We will monitor changes to guidance closely and adapt our approach to face masks as required.

## Year 11 – Qualifications and Exams.

You will be pleased to hear that all of our Year 11 students for 2019-2020 have received their results (with the exception of a small number of BTEC results following the last minute changes announced by the exam board). Despite the plethora of news reports, both positive and negative regarding the process this year, we are happy that the results our students have received are fair and match expectations. The process this year has been a minefield to navigate at times however our Exams Officer has done a fantastic job of ensuring all students received their results on GCSE Results day.

Our attention now turns to our new Year 11 cohort and the advice being provided by the Department for Education, the QCA and individual exam boards for next summer's exams. Information regarding this will be shared with parents/carers of Year 11 students once school has reopened.

## School Events and Parents Evenings.

Our school calendar will be issued at the start of next week (and be available to download from the school website). We have planned dates for our usual events and parents evenings however these dates are provisional and subject to COVID-19 risk assessment closer to the proposed date as to the potential to run in the normal fashion or via an alternative method.

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### Potential Second Wave/Lock down

Should there be any form of second wave and/or localised or national lock down we will need to revert to a form of operation similar to the summer term. We have plans formulated should this occur at short notice. As a school, we have learnt a lot from the dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and operating through the summer term. It was been something no-one was prepared for and lots of plans and decisions had to be made at short notice, in stressful circumstances in an effort to keep students, staff and families safe whilst trying to maintain some form of education for our students.

Our plans, should a second wave/lock down occur, have been refined based on what we have learnt from this experience and careful reviewing of decision we made and structures/plans we put in place. As such, we have bought additional resources/equipment and created/developed new systems to support learning both within school and for any form of remote learning should it be required.

However, our sincere hope remains that this does not occur and that we continue on our journey back to normal school operation.

### Next Steps

1. By Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August we will provide copies of the student's individual timetables.
2. By Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August the finalised school calendar will be provided to all parents/carers.
3. Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, our admin team will be onsite between 9am and 3pm and able to take any urgent queries by phone/email.
4. On Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, tutors will contact parents/carers to discuss the students return on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

I apologise for such a lengthy letter, however I feel it is important to fully share the official guidance we are operating under, the steps we are taking to reduce the risks to students, staff and families as well as outline the next steps.

I hope that both students and parents/carers enjoy the last part of the summer break and I look forward to welcoming all students back to school on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

Kind regards,



Headteacher

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