

Dear Parents,

It has been a busy couple of weeks with the publication of A Level and GCSE results and the last minute changes to the way that grades were determined. However, I am now writing to start the process of communicating plans for September.

You will be aware of the Government's expectation that all children in all year groups will return to school full-time in September and I am conscious that some will be anxious at the prospect, given how isolated we have all been over the last few months. To that end our pastoral team will be doing their best to support students as they return.

I want to reassure you that we are working hard to ensure the school environment is as safe as possible both for students and staff across both the Senior School and the Junior School. The two main measures that schools are expected to adopt are maintaining social distancing and keeping year groups separate. Government guidance recognises that these are not "all or nothing" matters and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Indeed, it will be logistically challenging to ensure adherence all of the time but the extent to which we can do so is likely to be beneficial for managing the risk of transmission. In addition, we will be taking a range of other appropriate measures to ensure robust hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as implementing a schedule of regular cleaning to minimise potential for contamination, so far as is reasonably practicable. Government guidance also anticipates that older children are more capable of adhering to social distancing measures but we are preparing a charter that all students should be able to follow. I appreciate that some of you will have greater concerns than others but I would appreciate all parents supporting the school in making these arrangements work and ask that you encourage your children to comply with all such measures.

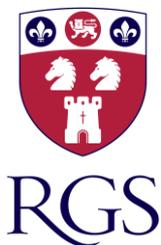
Current guidance does not recommend the use of face coverings in school as students and staff should be mixing in consistent groups, though the evidence is being kept under review and should any child wish to wear a face covering they may. We also anticipate that public transport capacity will continue to be constrained in the Autumn and its use by students, particularly in peak times, should be kept as low as possible. The roads around the RGS are already busy with cars so if students are able to walk or cycle to school they are encouraged to do so.

Our plan is to have year groups located in separate parts of the school to reduce the contact between groups. We shall be writing to you in due course with more of the logistical details about arrangements for arriving at school, changes to the structure of the school day (including our plans for feeding people, which anticipates a rotation of hot meals and packed lunches by year group) and departure. In all of this we aim to ensure that we continue to provide a full timetable with a broad and balanced curriculum for your child.

We will be expecting all students to wear uniform from the start of the Autumn term. Current guidance is that uniform does not need to be cleaned any more often than usual nor cleaned using methods which are different from normal. However, on the day where students have their Games afternoon, they will be expected to wear school sports kit with a school tracksuit throughout the day to reduce the pressure on changing facilities.

Inevitably, there will continue to be a number of limitations on the extent to which we can return to "normality" in the near future. For example, we are limited in the extent to which we can hold school assemblies, so most of these will take place virtually. Also, it may seem odd to be talking about Christmas already but, at the moment, it is unclear how we will be able to hold a carol service at the end of the coming term. We

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are going to have to accept that significant parts of our co-curricular program will be similarly constrained, at least for the time being.

Clearly, if your child should develop symptoms at any time, or be in the same household as someone who has symptoms, it is important that they stay at home and self-isolate. Similarly, if your child should fall ill at school or be identified through the system of Test and Trace as having been in contact with someone who has, they will need to be taken home. We will also need you to let us know the results of any Covid test that your child may take so that we can discuss when they can return to school and how we can continue to support them remotely in the meantime. Alongside all of the above, we are planning for the possibility of a local lockdown to ensure that, even should this happen, we will ensure the continuity of your children's education.

We will publish more detailed plans over the coming fortnight, including specific arrangements for the Junior and the Senior Schools, but we do want to ensure that people's concerns are heard and addressed. If you do have any particular worries about your child, please could you address them to communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk so that they can be passed to the right member of staff who can address them.

Meanwhile, despite all the complexity of the arrangements described above, I am very much looking forward to having your children back in school and I hope that they are also excited about coming back in for lessons and being with their friends again. We aim to re-establish the rich environment in which our students thrive and bring both students and staff back together in our wonderful school community. I hope that all will rise to the challenges that the new academic year will inevitably bring.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Stanford
Headmaster