



28<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

A warm welcome to the new academic year which is always an exciting time in college, full of promise and new energy. Can I thank you once again for your continued support in what has been an extraordinary academic year. I hope you all had a lovely summer holiday and I would like to thank you for the lovely cards and presents staff received at the end of term. For all new parents I would like to formally introduce myself. My name is Rob Millington and I am Head of College.

We understand that there are anxieties and nerves about the start of term and we all want to reassure you that we will be working in partnership with you every step along this difficult time in our lives. Form Tutors will be in touch with you at the start of term to introduce themselves.

We had around 40 students accessing College over the last 6 weeks of term and we are really pleased with how it went in our new college environment. I apologise for the length of this letter however, as I am sure you will agree, these are uncertain times and I thought you would appreciate greater insight into our planning and preparation. Should you have any further concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us on the **Helpline** - [helpline@newfriarscollege.org.uk](mailto:helpline@newfriarscollege.org.uk)

*We are opening College to just our **new starter students on Thursday 3rd September and for returning learners from the week starting Monday 7th September.** This is because our new learners have not had the traditional transition visits that they would usually have before starting College.*

As a College team we will constantly monitor the guidance and we will be guided by the experts. We have been and will continue to teach our students in 'bubbles' or zones. Our experience has been that the students have been glad to be back in College and to have a routine. Those students back in College have been well-prepared by their parents and carers who have shown them the booklet on the website that explains what College is like. It will be important for you to also prepare your son/daughter for the September start.

It is even more important that we work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that we minimise the Risk. Whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment the things that you can do that will help enormously:

### **DfE Guidance**

The Department for Education (DfE) has recognised that the reopening programme cannot be a 'one size fits all approach' and that it is individual school/colleges that are best placed to understand the needs of their school/colleges and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk. By understanding the context and geography of our site, we have been able to adhere to the DfE

Head of College: Rob Millington  
Castle Grove, Bucknall, Staffordshire ST2 8BH  
**Tel:** 01782 987180 | **Email:** [mdunster@Newfriars.shaw-education.org.uk](mailto:mdunster@Newfriars.shaw-education.org.uk) | **Web:**  
<http://www.newfriarscollege.org.uk>



guidance. We have reviewed and upscaled our health and safety risk assessments and drawn up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using a system of controls that the DfE has set out.

### Essential measures must include:

It is a requirement that people who display any known symptoms of coronavirus stay at home, follow the guidance issued by Public Health England and inform the school/college that this is the reason for their absence.

### Test, track and trace procedures will then be followed, as appropriate

- 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/college wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

### School/college response

We have considered how to minimise these contacts by how we:

- **group** children together
- **avoid contact** between groups of children and adults
- **arrange classrooms with forward facing desks**
- **ensure staff maintain distance** from students and other staff as much as possible

Our plans and contingencies have been written to prevent the spread of the virus and how we would respond to any infection.

### Prevention Measures

- minimising 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/college
- cleaning hands thoroughly more often than usual
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introducing enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- minimising contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

### Responding to an Infection

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

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## My son/daughter's mental health and preparation for being back in College

As a staff team, we have undertaken research about how students' mental health and wellbeing might be affected. We will be following the principles of the Carpenter 'Recovery Curriculum' and prioritising:-

- **Care**
- **Compassion**
- **Creativity**

The Government are very keen that all students make a full return to College at the beginning of term. We are prioritising care and compassion and we know that, for some of our students, this will be a struggle. Please do get in touch if you feel that your son/daughter will find the reality of returning to College, even with you following the advice above, very stressful.

## What are Zones and Bubbles?

We will have 3 Zones or bubbles operating. Staff will move between the bubbles but students will stay within their bubble in College. We will also make sure all transport is as safe as possible although students from different bubbles may need to be on the same Local Authority transport. Students will have different areas of College, different break and lunch times, different toilets and only share the resources in their zone or bubble. There will be around 50 students in each zone.

The zones are based on the pathways that the students are in so this means that they will be with their peers in classes and of a similar ability level. All teachers and other staff can operate across different pathways. Staff will try to keep their distance from students and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. However, we recognise, as I am sure you do, that this will be a challenge in our small College and with students having differing needs. Staff will try to avoid close face to face contact and they will try to minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone

## Classroom layout

Classrooms will be rearranged with desks spread out and facing forward as per government advice. All students will sanitise their hands before entry into the classroom and will wipe down their desk and chair with sanitising wipes before leaving for their next lesson. Staff will support with this where needed. Resources will be stored for that bubble separately and where this is not possible, they will be cleaned and sanitised or stored for 3 days before reuse.

## Preparation for Adulthood

We have a very creative timetable and curriculum offer for next year which helps prepare our students to be as independent as possible. This means that we will be resuming travel training, work experience, supported internships and educational visits where safe to do so. All of our pathways use the local community and we will continue to do so but with a detailed risk assessment. We do not want to dilute any of our offer as a college, but health and safety will always be our first priority.

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## Attendance and student illness?

The Government have stated that all students should be returning to College, we will therefore, as directed, be tracking attendance closely. However, please ensure that if your child is symptomatic

- a high temperature – this means they feel hot to touch on the chest or back (you do not need to measure their temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed your child/or your child tells you that they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

## Transport?

We are communicating very closely with the LA transport teams – at the moment, we do not know what time pick-ups and departures will be – I am afraid that we will all have to be flexible next term – particularly about start and finish times. We have devised a very comprehensive system for getting students off the transport and into College, then reversing this at the end of the day. The LA

transport teams have the most unenviable task of us all trying to ensure that they mitigate risk as much as possible.

We do not yet know who will be transported on what transport with whom. It will be the responsibility of the parent / carer to check the transport on arrival at your house – transport clean, escort wearing mask (your child wearing a mask if they are able to). There will be separate areas in College for disembarkation and entering the building. When taxis arrive at College, the transport team and staff will greet students and supervise removal of masks. They will then be escorted to their TA team who will supervise hand washing and support students to their classrooms.

At the end of the day, students will be supervised putting on their masks and staff will check that the vehicle is clean and escorts are wearing masks.

## Cleaning, Personal Care and Enteral Feeding?

We have extended the hours of the cleaning team and will have Personal Care team in one bubble/zone. To support with arrangements for toileting – the PC Team will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks and visors, as will Emily, our Enteral Feeding Assistant.

## Lunch and Break

The canteen will be open and our chef will be cooking a daily hot meal – menus to follow. If your son/daughter has a packed lunch, it needs to be brought into school in plastic bags that will get thrown away at the end of the lunch sitting. There are different lunch sittings and the 3 bubbles will not meet. Most students will have lunch in their classrooms. The timings are all approximate – we

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know that we will have to thoroughly clean surfaces after the first setting – if we need more time to do this, we will have to allow for that.

### **Break-times?**

Bubbles/Zones will have separate areas to exercise out and will not have the opportunity to meet either outside or on the corridors

### **What happens if there is a local outbreak and my son/daughter can't come to College?**

We will provide on-line learning for your son/daughter and wellbeing calls. Please can I stress once again that anybody with symptoms must not come into College.

### **Items brought into College?**

Please keep these to a minimum – students all have their own College equipment assigned to them in College that is kept separate to everyone else's.

### **Parents & carers coming into College?**

We will unfortunately have to keep this to a minimum in the autumn term, but please do ring us if you ever want to discuss **any** aspect of College life. We will hopefully have EHCP meetings from October onwards.

### **Test and Trace**

Swift action will be taken if and where required. Your son/daughter's health is of paramount importance to us. Please be reassured that we will do everything we can to minimise risks in College. Please read the specific guidance on our website.

### **Swimming Pool?**

We will monitor government guidance about the opening of the pool. This will be in very small operational groupings. We will update parents further in September.

### **External Therapies – Physio, Music therapy and Speech and Language?**

External therapies including physio sessions will hopefully be resumed in September.

### **Face Coverings**

Face coverings in College will be allowed and encouraged. They should be binned safely, or if re-usable, stored in a plastic bag and kept with the student. Masks must NOT have inappropriate language or images etc on them.

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## What you can do to help your son/daughter:

- ensure (where possible) they understand how to keep themselves safe - 'catch-it, bin it, kill it', regular handwashing and social distancing;
- ensure they have a face mask if they are using public transport
- ensure they understand how to dispose of a face mask safely- or, if it is a re-useable one, how to keep it hygienically in their bag (by providing carry cases, or small plastic bags);
- encourage them to talk to teachers or staff if they have any concerns; (where possible)
- help them to understand that the College will be different in September and the importance of following new rules to keep themselves and others safe.

## Blended Learning

On a practical note, we will continue to explore ways of how best to deliver a spell of home learning should any form of closure/partial closure be deemed necessary in the future. This will ensure that your son/daughters' education is not disrupted any more than necessary.

## Home-School Agreement

There will be a new **Home Learning Preparation Checklist** that staff will complete. We need to be all clear on how we can support each other. This will be sent out at the start of the Autumn term.

## Data Collection

Data collection forms **MUST** be completed and returned by email by Friday 11th September. It is important that we always have your correct contact details and that you inform us of any changes to phone numbers or email addresses.

## Start dates and finish times?

**Term starts for new starters only on Thursday 3rd September**

**Continuing students will start on Monday 7th September**

The College day will remain the same as it is now (8.45am – 3.00pm).

Should you have any further concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. The holiday dates for next year (2020-2021) have been attached and are on our website.

Parents are encouraged to visit [gov.uk/backtoschool](http://gov.uk/backtoschool) for information and practical guidance to help them plan for the return to school/college. This includes the latest update to the [guidance for parents and carers on what they need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term](#).

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Please also see: <https://showcase.dropbox.com/s/COVID-19-Back-to-School-Safely-content-Autumn-2020-8yzReowxp5v0L47hfhYUN>

Can I finally offer my sincerest gratitude to you for your fortitude, resilience and unwavering support for the College and our decisions. It has been an incredibly challenging time for you all, combining your own work commitments, managing home learning, looking after your families and above all staying safe. I am delighted that our wonderful Newfriars community will be back together again in September.

Please continue to stay safe and I look forward to welcoming our students back.

Kind Regards

Rob Millington

Head Of College

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