



High Tunstall College of Science

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Headteacher: Mark R Tilling

Deputy Headteachers: Peter W Hayward and Laura Ovens

23rd September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

This is my second update for this half term and follows the announcements made by the Prime Minister yesterday. I will come to our new plans around Covid-19 a little later in this letter but would like to update you about other issues first.

The College car park comes into full use from Monday 28th September 2020. Thank you with your forbearance around the construction phase. I am sure that if you have seen the pictures or visited the College you will agree with me that the car park now provides the right number of car spaces for us all to use, safely.

On Monday 28th the new pedestrian access on the North side of the building, further up on Elwick Road, comes into operation. Any student that came into the College from the old Elwick Road entrance should enter by that gate and not cross the main vehicular gate. Students must use this entrance/exit with care until the crossing patrol position is moved higher up the road. We have carefully thought out the access to the site to make it as safe as possible and we ask you to discuss this with your son/daughter. Further information is available on our website and I ask you to familiarise yourselves with where parents/carers should or should not park. Please support us so we continue to have safe access to our College site.

BAM are due to leave the College site on Wednesday 7th October 2020. I am very proud of the facility they have built and I believe that we now have an educational facility that is fit for the 21st century. With very little modifications we have made it Covid-19 safe, enabling students to access the buildings safely and in their own segments. Lunchtimes are much smoother and I thank the students with their understanding around the use of the outside areas. I would like to place on record my thanks to BAM and the DFE for giving us an educational building that we can be proud of. Now we have to make use of it to maximise our learning.

The students have returned to college fantastically, engaging in learning and being understanding in the changes we have made in a very positive manner. I would like to thank you as parents/carers for supporting the changes we have made, understanding the importance of the restrictions in place and ensuring all the young people comply. As always, the High Tunstall family rises to the challenge and is ready to face all that we encounter.

Now I return to our Covid-19 restrictions. As a college, we continually review our practices and process and the use of facemasks in the College, which at the moment are a matter of personal choice, has been one we have considered in some detail. Unfortunately, the number of coronavirus cases continues to rise nationally and regionally; many areas are now subject to local restrictions and the announcements from the Prime Minister about further restrictions yesterday has led us to change our policy on the use of facemasks.

Governors and I have decided to make the use of facemasks in communal areas mandatory for all staff and students and it is expected that this will be implemented on Monday giving families and young people time to get used to them. **For clarity, facemasks must be worn in corridors and the Heart, when not eating.** Facemasks are not appropriate in the classroom unless there is clear medical evidence that your son/daughter must wear one at all times.

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It is important that facemasks are used sensibly and responsibly and I would urge you to discuss their use with your son/daughter. We want to ensure that we protect each other and stay open as a College, Covid-19 free. Safe storage and disposal of facemasks is essential in our college, please can you ensure your son/daughter have plenty of supplies of facemasks and a named sealable plastic bag to place their used facemasks in. It is important that if they are disposing of a facemask at college that you use the yellow bin bags around the buildings to ensure the safe disposal of all facemasks. Together we can keep your son/daughter in education throughout the winter, making up for all the lost time from the national lockdown.

If your son/daughter is exempt, please inform the College. They will be provided with a badge so that staff and students do not ask why they are not wearing a facemask. Please note these will be delivered to the College in the near future.

The guidance from the DFE doesn't say the use of facemasks in communal areas is mandatory. Why does my son/daughter have to wear one?

The guidance from the DFE is reviewed regularly. At one stage, the use of facemasks was not deemed to be appropriate at all in education settings. This has now changed to allow Headteachers discretion to decide in what circumstances they should be used, however, they are mandatory in areas where local restrictions are imposed. With the current rising numbers of coronavirus cases locally, the increasing number of areas subject to local restrictions and the announcements from the Government yesterday, the College believes it is the right time to make the use of facemasks mandatory in communal areas.

What happens if my son/daughter does not have a facemask?

The College has secured a supply of disposable face masks and we will provide these to students to wear as part of the uniform when they arrive without their own facemasks, just like we do with ties and other items of uniform. The facemask and lanyard are both important parts of our uniform, aimed at keeping us all free from Covid-19.

My son/daughter is exempt from wearing a facemask.

We know that some students and staff are exempt from wearing face coverings because of the following reasons:

- They can't put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- They are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate.

If you believe your son/daughter should be exempt from wearing a mask, then we would ask that you put this in writing along with the reasons for the exemption.

It is clear that the Government want schools to be the last to close in the case of further lockdowns. I hope you appreciate that this measure has been brought in so that as a college we can mitigate the risks against Covid-19 as far as practicable. If you have any queries, please raise them with the Covid-19 lead Mr Pickford at dpickford@hightunstall.hartlepool.sch.uk.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Mr Mark Tilling
Headteacher