



# Penwortham Girls' High School

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**IMPORTANT: All links and information highlighted in red can be accessed via the September 2020 section of the school's website. Please check this on a regular basis as we will updating and adding information as and when required.**

15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

As the end of the Summer Term approaches, I am writing to you with information about plans for welcoming all of our students back to school in September. We are extremely excited by this prospect, and we've taken considerable time to ensure that our school environment is as safe as possible. Your daughter's school experience will be both worthwhile and enjoyable when she returns / joins us in September.

Whilst much of your daughter's school experience will be similar, there will be inevitable changes in place to ensure that both students and staff are kept as safe as possible during this pandemic. The plans, which I will outline below, are based on guidance produced by the DFE on July 2<sup>nd</sup>: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

It is strongly advised that you also read the government's guidance for parents: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

In order to open the school for all students in September, we must:

- *Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school*
- *Ensure that students and staff clean hands more thoroughly than usual*
- *Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it', bin it, kill it' approach*
- *Introduce enhanced cleaning, including frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.*

DFE guidance also requires us to 'properly consider' the following, and put in place measures to suit our particular circumstances:

- *Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.*



In specific circumstances, we are also required, where necessary, to wear PPE. This will be if we need to deal with a symptomatic student or member of staff. Some staff may wear PPE, such as a face visor, if the circumstances require it.

To implement these measures, we will be:

- Increasing the number of hours in our cleaning contract so that all surfaces, classrooms, etc, can be cleaned on a regular basis throughout the day where needed.
- Purchasing mobile hand washing stations
- Putting hand sanitiser, tissues, anti bac wipes and pedal bins, in every classroom.

However, the greatest challenge for all schools is that of minimising contact between individuals and maintaining social distancing. Some changes are straightforward. For example, we will:

- Rearrange the furniture in every classroom so that students are seated facing the front.
- Ensure that there is a 2 metre space between students and their teachers at the front of the classroom.

However, in order to ensure students and staff are kept as safe as possible and that the spread of potential infection is minimised, we must restructure how our school is organised and managed. This will involve the creation of **five 'mini schools'**:

- Each year group will be allocated a specific area of the school, where they will be taught the full curriculum (with a few limitations). This is the only area of the school they will access, apart from during break and lunchtimes and when accessing dedicated specialist teaching rooms. (See Plan of the school on the website)
- In order to ensure that Years 10 and 11 access all of their GCSE subjects, they will be contained within Year 10 and 11 'bubbles', with approximately 155 students in each.
- Years 7, 8 and 9 students will be taught in Tutor Groups and will remain in bubbles of 30-32 students. Whilst we do not normally teach the majority of lessons in Years 7-9 in Tutor Groups, by doing so this avoids us having to send an entire year group home in the event of an outbreak within that year group.
- Due to the way the timetable is constructed, and because we want to provide the full curriculum experience, we cannot teach in form groups in Key Stage 4. However, we have constructed a timetable so that movement is kept to a minimum.
- During the school day, our key priority will be to ensure that 'bubbles' within a year group, or across a year group, do not interact with one another. Therefore, we have put in place a number of measures to address this. KS4 (Years 10 and 11) will have a different school day to KS3 (Years 7-9). This will include:
  - Different start and finish times (See school day on website)
  - Different break and lunchtimes
  - Three 100-minute lessons, instead of five one-hour lessons, for Key Stage 4. This will help to reduce both movement and interaction between students.

It is essential that parents ensure their daughters arrive at school **no earlier than 10 minutes before** their school day officially starts. This will enable us to ensure that social distancing is maintained until they arrive at their designated classrooms.

We must also remind parents that you must not drop off or pick up on the school site. Please be considerate of other road users and residents, as well as social distancing, when you drop off and pick up. For those students who now need to access the school via Alcester Avenue (Y9 & Y10) **please do not access Alcester Avenue itself** and arrange to drop off on Hill Road / Liverpool Road since this is a narrow residential street.

All parents / carers will be able to access their individual student's timetable, via Class Charts, on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Please note that if you need to come into school for any reason, we would ask that you call in advance, unless it is an absolute emergency, to arrange an appointment to ensure we minimise the number of visitors and can manage our reception area safely.

### **The curriculum and within the classroom**

All students will be taught the vast majority of their normal curriculum (with a few minor exceptions) and will be taught by subject specialists. However, their teacher might not be the same teacher they have when we revert to our normal timetable (if and when we are told it is safe to do so).

Students will remain in one classroom for the vast majority of their timetable, with subject specialist staff moving around to teach them. Wherever possible, we are trying to ensure that teachers are assigned to either Years 7-9 or Years 10-11. Where this is not the case, we have ensured that staff do not teach both KS3 and KS4 on the same day.

All students will have access to an ICT suite. Years 10 and 11 students will also have access to designated specialist classrooms, needed for GCSE subjects with a practical component (For example, art and music).

Whilst certain activities (such as group work, whole-class discussion, etc) will not be possible, we will do our very best to ensure that our students get the quality experience they are used to. As well as providing home learning, our staff have been very busy modifying their curriculum to ensure that

we 'hit the ground running' in September. PGHS is well known for its high expectations and we will instill in all of our students the importance of making every lesson count, within a nurturing, friendly and supportive environment.

We are determined to make up for any lost time and, ultimately, ensure that our students enjoy the success they deserve. We know our current Year 10, in particular, might be feeling anxious about their exams next year, but we have already started to plan additional support for them. This will be finalised once we know the final outcome of the consultation on next year's assessment programme currently being carried out by Ofqual, the examinations

regulatory body: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-launches-consultation-on-2021-exams-and-assessments>

## Student resources and equipment

Below are some key changes that both you and your daughter will need to be aware of in September:

- Students will not be able to use their lockers for the first few weeks at least. Therefore, they will need to ensure that they only bring to school the equipment they need for that particular day. This will require them to be extremely well organised and will require your support.
- Only GCSE PE and Dance students will access full PE lessons during the first few weeks. If other students have PE timetabled on a particular day, they should ensure they have their trainers so they can be taken out (weather permitting) for light exercise on the fields / tennis courts.
- Staff will not collect in exercise books for marking. All marking will be completed either electronically or on a separate piece of paper, which will then be stuck in exercise books.
- Whilst students may be given handouts to stick in their exercise books or take home, sharing of other resources will be kept to a minimum. For example, textbooks.
- Sharing of resources must be avoided where possible. Students must only use their own stationery, etc. We will have some spare pens and pencils but, as these can't be returned, we want to avoid doing this as much as possible. Any equipment used for practical purposes will be thoroughly cleaned after every use.
- Practical subjects, such as technology, music, etc, will be predominantly theory-based for the first weeks in Years 7-9. However, as with PE, we will keep this under constant review so that we can provide these at the earliest opportunity, when it is safe to do so. Music tuition will continue to be offered for individual students who want it, with adaptations to ensure safety measures are in place.
- A lot of homework tasks will be set using the current systems for home learning. This is because we need to maintain these good habits in the event of a local lockdown and an immediate school closure. Our new Year 7 students will be provided with all the log in details, etc, at the start of term.

## Behaviour

The exceptional behavior of the vast majority of our students is a strength of our school and we expect this to continue in September. Adherence to our school rules will be more important than ever in order to ensure the safety of everyone within school. We have modified our Behaviour Policy, in light of the pandemic, and any infringements will be dealt

with severely. Can you please take time, during the holidays, to read the [Behaviour Policy Appendix on the school website](#) with your daughter so that it is fully understood before her return.

### **Attendance / punctuality**

The government expects every student (with the exception of those having to self-isolate) to return in September. A copy of our [Attendance Policy](#) can be found on the school's website. We know, from the conversations we have had with our Year 10 students, that a lot of girls have completely changed their routines at home, especially their sleeping habits! In order to ensure a safe and productive start in September, please ensure that your daughter starts to adapt to her normal school routine in the weeks and days leading up to her return to school.

If we are to maintain the 'bubbles' which have been created to keep your daughters safe, it is vital that pupils arrive on time to school, thereby avoiding contact with other year groups and classes.

### **Uniform**

DFE guidelines has stated the following in its guidance for parents:

*We are encouraging all schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term. Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, or in any different way to normal due to coronavirus (COVID-19).*

Can you please ensure that your daughter returns to school in her full uniform in September. If you foresee a problem with this, can you please email the school enquiries at [enquiries@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk) and someone will be in touch. We have recently set up a Uniform Bank, enabling parents to donate items of uniform in good condition for the use of other students. If you would like to access the uniform bank, please email [headspa@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:headspa@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk) and we will endeavour to meet your needs.

Given the amount of time our students have been out of school, I have no doubt that a number of girls will have got into habits regarding the wearing of make-up, false nails, jewellery, etc. Can you please ensure that any such issues are addressed before your daughter returns to school. Although operating in challenging circumstances, we will maintain our very high expectations and standards regarding uniform and general appearance. [Please check our Uniform Policy on the school website.](#)

### **Pastoral Support and Wellbeing**

After such an extensive amount of time out of school, successful student reintegration will depend on strong, supportive relationships and effective routines. Although we have had to change our school day, all years will continue to have a daily form period to ensure your daughter receives the pastoral care and support needed for a successful return to school.

We know that some students are anxious about returning to school; we understand that some students are worried about missed work, and we know the challenges/sadness that some of our girls have had to endure during the home school period. In order to ensure that we can provide the support your daughter needs, Raising Achievement Coordinators (RACs) will be attached to their year's bubble to provide assistance and to arrange additional help where needed. All students will have a teacher allocated as their Tutor to ensure that every pupil has daily contact with a member of staff who is there to support their wellbeing.

In addition to the support provided by their Tutor and Raising Achievement Coordinator, students requiring additional support will be able to access the following help:

- Personal guidance from one of our trained Mental Health Champions
- One-to-one counselling from our Pastoral Support Worker
- A consultation with the school nurse to discuss any physical or mental health challenges
- Support and advice from our safeguarding team

During lockdown, the DFE and the local authority have provided extensive resources about supporting your daughter's wellbeing. We have promoted these on a regular basis in our weekly newsletter and they are also available via [our school's website](#).

### **Break and lunchtimes**

These will be staggered to avoid any unnecessary interaction between bubbles. We will be offering our normal lunchtime service but, unfortunately, we will not be able to offer any food in the dining room and Courtyard Cafe at break. This is because breaktime is too short to allow for social distancing and cleaning between groups accessing the food service. Lunchtime will be spaced over a much longer period of time in order to get every 'bubble' through at different times. If your daughter routinely skips breakfast and relies on our break service, we strongly advise that she has something to eat before coming to school, or ensures she brings something with her for break time.

The hot meal service offer will initially be reduced to enable us to assess how the lunchtime period runs and how many students are accessing the service. We will be offering burgers, jacket potatoes, paninis, Pasta King, cold sandwiches, cakes and drinks. This will be kept under review and will be increased to offer our hot main meal service as soon as is practicable.

### **Transport**

We are currently carrying out a survey relating to transport, and how your daughter will come to school in September, and we would greatly appreciate it if you can complete this as soon as possible. This is to support the planning at school and county level for both the dedicated school buses and public transport.

The government strongly advises that students avoid public transport if at all possible. If your daughter *does* need to use a bus, it is important to be aware of the following:

### School Transport

We have been advised by Lancashire County Council that since students on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent, the usual social distancing measures will not apply from the autumn term 2020.

For our bus services, we will issue further guidance once we have received it from LCC; this is likely to be over the summer as they need to collate all the data received via the travel survey in order to safely plan the transport provision for September – this is why completion of this survey is essential.

The approach to dedicated transport will be aligned as far as possible with the principles underpinning the system of controls set out in school and where possible take into account how pupils are grouped together at school.

The wearing of face masks will be compulsory – please refer to the guidance below relating to the use of public transport. Students will also need to use the hand sanitizer that will be provided as they get on and off the bus.

### Public Transport

If your daughter will use public transport she must wear a face mask and apply social distancing. This must be removed before she enters school and there will be waste bins at the school entrances for disposable masks. Any other type of mask must be removed, placed in a plastic bag, and put away before your daughter enters school. We are advised that hands must be washed after the removal of face masks, and all students will be required to wash their hands on arrival at school, regardless of how they have travelled here, in accordance with our risk assessment.

Further information about the safe use of public transport is available here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

Although I don't want to overload you with information, I feel it is necessary to give you an insight into what September will look like at PGHS. I have no doubt that, having read this letter, you have many questions, and I would urge you to contact school with any queries at [covidquestions@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:covidquestions@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk). Although the end of the summer term is swiftly approaching, the school leadership team will be busy at various times throughout the next 6 weeks to ensure we are ready for any eventuality in September, so someone will get back to you with a response as soon as they can.

I know a number of you have children attending other schools and, inevitably, there will be a natural instinct to compare, favourably or otherwise, their provision for September with ours. Please be reassured that we have consulted with many other schools and headteachers, and studied a range of models offered for other educational settings. It is important to realise that no two schools are the same and the model we are proposing is the one that we consider to be the most beneficial and suitable for the context of PGHS.

On the August 11<sup>th</sup>, the government will be reviewing its advice to schools and there may well be some changes. With this in mind, the school leadership team will be meeting in school on August 12<sup>th</sup> to address any issues that may arise, and make any changes to our plans where necessary. Following this meeting, I will write to you again to make you aware of any changes or to confirm the arrangements, as outlined above.

I know these are very strange times, but I cannot emphasise enough how excited staff are at the thought of returning to school in September and working with our students once again. It may not be the experience we would hope for, but we are looking forward to it and we are determined to remain positive and provide a very warm welcome for our students when we finally meet / see them all again.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to thank you for your unstinting support during the past few months. As many of our staff are all too aware, it cannot have been easy home schooling your own children whilst trying to juggle this with your other commitments and responsibilities.

On behalf of the Governing Body and staff, I would like to wish you all an enjoyable and restful summer holiday.

Take care and stay safe.

Karen Pomeroy