

The De Montfort School

UNLOCKING YOUR CHILD'S POTENTIAL



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TDMS Return to School Update

Dear Parent/Carer

We have been delighted at how well our children have started the new school year, given the challenges this presents in terms of resuming their education and ensuring their and staff safety.

I thought it would be useful to clarify a few points regarding what is in place at the school.

1. Size of bubbles

Government Advice: In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, the bubbles are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and students to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended. Schools have been advised that maintaining the integrity of the bubble is the key factor.

TDMS: Our bubbles are indeed in year groups, with very strict zoning and routing of entrances/exits. In addition to this, we are also endeavouring to minimise contact within the year group where this is possible. For example, Year 6 eat lunch in their year group zone but mainly with their own tutor group. This goes beyond the government stipulations.

2. Social distancing and touch

Government Advice: For children old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest children and some children with complex needs and it is not feasible in some schools where space does not allow. Schools doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

TDMS: We are strongly encouraging the children to maintain distance as far as is possible and to not touch their peers. We have also extended this advice to include the journey on the way to/from school and in communal areas. Very few of our children require some form of physical support and, in each case, this is very carefully risk managed to protect both the child and the member of staff.

3. Social distancing between students in the classroom

Government Advice: Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating pupils side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space.

TDMS: All classrooms have been radically adapted with students now seated side by side and facing forwards in rows. Teacher tables have also, where necessary, been rotated and computers re-cabled to enable a safety corridor

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of 2m for the member of staff. All unnecessary furniture has been removed to maximise space. Where any seats do face each other (e.g. computer rooms,) screening has been implemented.

In my July letter, Q10 asked “How will my child’s class be taught, ensuring social distancing and safety?” My answer was:

- Children are to be in year group bubbles, as stated in government guidelines
- All seats will be facing forwards and the maximum distance between each child will be achieved in each room through revisiting classroom layouts
- Although the children are to be in whole year group bubbles, staff will continue to encourage them to maintain the 2m social distancing as far as is possible

These measures have all been met. Children are in a year group bubbles.

The government is fully aware that with all children returning to school in September and with the classrooms having fixed dimensions, children cannot be physically 2m apart in the classroom, except in very few cases of very small class sizes.

At TDMS, the children are as far apart as is possible, given the size of the class, the size and dimensions of the classroom and also the specific requirement for the member of staff to be 2m from the children at all times. As per the government guidelines, children are therefore seated side by side facing forwards in rows, and the member of staff is at the front of the room at a 2m minimum distance from the children.

Outside of the classroom, social distancing is, of course, encouraged as far as is possible.

4. Wearing of face coverings/masks in corridors

Government Advice: In an area/locality designated by the government as one with high incidence, children must wear face coverings in communal areas/corridors.

Public Health England Advice: Movement between classrooms in corridors presents very low risk.

TDMS: Although, in Evesham, we are fortunately in an area designated as **low incidence** and even though Public Health England state that corridor movement presents low risk, we have still added some safety mitigations regarding corridor movement.

- a) When students are returning from break/lunch,** the children are collected by their next teacher in a specified sequence to endeavour to minimise corridor congestion
- b) Before break/lunch and the end of the day,** the children are released by teachers one group at a time
- c) Parents have also been given the option to determine if their child should wear a face covering or mask**

To begin with, corridors may well feel relatively congested, as students return to school after such a long time away from any crowds. We are aware of this point and will do our very best to use our mitigations (points a and b above) to help and, of course, our ability to co-ordinate these multiple arrivals/ departures will improve, reducing congestion and helping to alleviate any anxiety.

5. Wearing of face coverings/masks in communal areas

Government Advice: Face coverings/masks are not necessary in an area of low incidence.

Public Health England Advice: Face coverings/masks can add to risk if not worn correctly and they do not need to be worn in corridors, as exposure is transient.

TDMS: Despite the advice from the government and Public Health England, we recognise that some parents/children will want to have the option to wear a covering/mask. We are therefore giving parents that choice.

Sixth Form only: Please wear a face covering in the Sixth Form Common Room, Library and Private Study areas

6. Wearing of face coverings/masks in classrooms

Government Advice: Face coverings/masks are not encouraged in the classroom as the disadvantages outweigh their advantages.

Public Health England Advice: Face coverings/masks are not encouraged in the classroom as the disadvantages outweigh their advantages, in particular their not being worn correctly.

TDMS: At present, we are not encouraging the wearing of coverings/masks in classrooms, but we will allow children to wear them if parents specifically request that their child wears one.

This is a concession, given that the Headteacher, in a school in a low incidence area, has the discretion to insist that everyone does or does not wear a face covering.

Please Note: Our position on the wearing of face coverings/masks is, however, being constantly reviewed in line with government advice.

7. Congestion on arrival/leaving the school:

TDMS: Start of the Day - Congestion has been minimal at the beginning of the day, as our multiple entrances have helped and some children arrive slightly before others. To reduce congestion further our children go straight into their tutor rooms and do not mingle in their zones.

In addition, to reduce congestion:

Years 6, 7 and 8 can enter from 8.45 a.m.

Years 9, 10 and 11 can enter from 8.55 a.m.

Please do not send your child to school before these times as we cannot staff the classrooms.

TDMS: End of the Day – Children who catch a bus, leave their classroom at **2.50 p.m.** enabling them to get safely to their bus-waiting zone within their year group area, before the rest of the school starts to leave.

To further support social distancing:

Years 6, 7 and 8 leave at 3.00 p.m.

Years 9, 10 and 11 and the Sixth Form will leave at 3.05 p.m.

Can I remind parents/carers to, where possible, avoid gathering at our entrances/exits.

We have also reminded the children of the need to avoid mingling/interacting with other year groups.

Conclusion

We know this is naturally an anxious time for everyone and therefore we are reviewing our procedures constantly. So, if you have any concerns, please do let us know as together we will be able to support our children, staff and you through this challenging time.

Please do not visit the school, but email staff where necessary.

Yours sincerely



Guy Nichols