



September 3rd 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Updates for Students' Return to School

We are excited to be getting closer to seeing our students back next week. Thank you for your patience while we carry out all of the necessary site and staff preparations for a safe return to school.

In this letter, I have provided updates on some important elements of our return to school next week. At the bottom of the letter, you will also find the latest version of our Frequently Asked Questions, or FAQs, which can also be found on our website.

Parent/Carer Handbook

Our 2020-21 Parent/Carer Handbook is now available on our website <https://bit.ly/2GkgWQA>. The handbook is significantly bigger this year. This is because it contains all of the information about how we are operating during the pandemic. There is still lots of information that is not yet in the handbook that can be found on our web-site, www.colmers.school.

In the Handbook, you will find key information about our Hub Model, our Curriculum and Timetable, our Behaviour for Learning Policy, Safeguarding and Early Help, and all of the specific COVID-19 measures we are putting in place for a safe return to school.

If you have any queries, please contact Main Reception on 0121 453 1778 or email enquiries@colmers.school

Attendance

Are all students expected to return to school, even if they are clinically vulnerable or live with someone clinically vulnerable?

Yes, all students are expected to return to school. Attendance is compulsory from the start of term.

Unless you are formally notified of a local lockdown where schools are closed, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability of local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

The DFE has published this guidance for parents and carers which explains the expectations:

<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/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

I am really worried about sending my child back to school and don't think it is safe. What should I do?

If you do not think it is safe to send your child to school and are considering keeping your child at home, please contact Main Reception or your child's Head of Year. We will talk through with you how we can help and support. We appreciate this is a big worry for some parents and carers and will do our very best to work with you to find a positive solution.

Face Coverings

What is the school policy on face coverings for the start of term?

Although DFE Guidance does not require face coverings in school at this time, we have taken the decision as a school to recommend that staff and students wear a face covering when in communal areas and moving around the school. We will be giving students guidance on how to put on and take off their face coverings to minimise any risks at those key times – sanitiser is available in all classrooms and we will be emphasising the importance of hand hygiene at all times.

The school will provide 2 re-usable, washable face coverings to each student for this purpose or they can wear their own.

Students are asked not to wear a mask in classrooms due to the communication barriers created, however there may be some students who, for personal reasons, including extreme anxiety, wish to wear a mask at all times and will be allowed to do so. This is subject to consent from the Headteacher and full co-operation with all elements of mask hygiene and school behaviour rules. Parents/carers of a child who wishes to wear a face mask in lessons should submit the request to leaman@colmers.school.

Communication

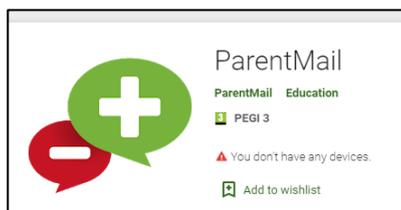
Class Charts is Coming!



We are very excited to be launching Class Charts with you and with students as part of our communication strategy. Class Charts will replace SIMSApp as our communication tool. If you have the SIMSAPP, you will be able to delete this and will be asked to download the Class Charts App instead. I am confident you will agree that Class Charts has some really fantastic features. For example, you have often told me how important it is to you to know which teacher has sent a positive ping or a sanction – you will be able to see all of that and much more on the Class Charts App. You have also wanted to know more about the homework that is being set for your child: all of your child's homework will be set through the App so you can help your child stay on top of homework and monitor if it has been completed. You will also be able to see your child's attendance and progress reports.

Please keep an eye out tomorrow for the information telling you what you need to do to create your Class Charts Account.

Why do I still Need ParentMail ?



ParentMail is the other essential communication tool we use at Colmers. We send you notifications of letters and key information via text message, email or the ParentMail App. ParentMail also allows you to pay for your child to purchase food from our school canteen and to pay for trips, visits and other school purchases. We will also use Parentmail for permission slips and parent surveys.

If you do not have an account for ParentMail, please do prioritise signing up before the start of term. If you have any difficulties accessing ParentMail, please contact Main Reception and we will get back to you with help and support.

Travel To and From School

It is particularly important during the COVID-19 arrangements that students travel safely to school. Wherever possible, students should avoid using public transport. If traveling by bus, students are required to wear a face covering.

Parents and carers may wish to work with or drop their children to school. It is vital that we do not have any groups congregating at school gates so that we maximise social distancing. In addition, we are still without a car park for drop of and collection of students. If you are bringing your child to school please follow the following guidance:

- Please do not wait directly by the school gates at the start or end of the school day.
- If collecting by foot, please arrange an agreed meeting point with your child that is at a distance from the school premises to reduce congestion
- If dropping off or collecting by car, please avoid dropping off and/or collection on the Bristol Road or Belton Grove / Leybrook Road – using these causes major health and safety risks for our students.
- Please use suitable drop off locations including, Morrisons, Buzz Bingo, Colmers Astro Turf, McDonalds, Ashill Road, Kendall Rise Road, Cliff Rock Road

We would like to support more students traveling to school by bike but at this time with the build project underway, we are unable to offer secure bike storage. We are looking into options for this as soon as possible and will keep you updated.

Parent/Carer Visits and Meetings

To help us maintain a safe site during this year, parents and carers are asked to always make an appointment before visiting the school site. Meetings with parents and carers will whenever possible be scheduled as virtual meetings, using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. If a meeting is required on site, it will be scheduled outside of the school day i.e. before or after students are on site, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Toilets

We have organised student toilets so that each year group has its own set of student toilet facilities. Students will be encouraged to go to the toilet during their Brunch break. We do recognise that some students, especially those with medical needs, will need to access toilets during lessons and this will be monitored to ensure the toilets do not become overcrowded.

We have completely refurbished one set of toilets in our East Block to bring them up to an acceptable standard. This set of toilets has floor - to - ceiling cubicles and there is a single entrance to the toilets. These will be the **Year 10 toilet provision**. While we are operating our Hub model we have designated 3 separate cubicles for girls and 3 for boys, with one gender-neutral cubicle. Under normal circumstances, students would have the choice to go to a completely gender separated set of toilets in the East Block but during the Hub model there is not an alternative location for Year 10. If this causes any concerns for individual students or parents/carers, please let the Head of Year know. We will review the designation of the toilets when we move from our Hub Model to our usual model of students moving around the site.

Cashless Catering and Lanyards

In order to reduce touch points we have changed from a finger-print system of cashless catering to one that is card-operated. Your child will receive a cashless catering card and a lanyard, colour-coded for their Year Hub. It will be essential that students get into the habit of remembering to wear their lanyard every day with their cashless catering card attached, whether or not they buy food on site. Your help reminding them that this is a vital part of their school equipment would be much appreciated.

If you have any concerns about the return to school for your child, please contact their Head of Year in the first instance or by all means write to me, eleaman@colmers.school , and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We really look forward to students starting back with us next week and thank you in advance for your support over the coming months.

Best wishes,



E Leaman
Headteacher

#safereturntoschool #you'vebeenmissed



Colmers School September 2020: Back to School Safely Arrangements

Frequently Asked Questions

September 2nd Updates

Face Coverings

What is the school policy on face coverings for the start of term? (Amended from July 14th)

Although DFE Guidance does not require face coverings in school at this time, we have taken the decision to recommend that staff and students wear a face covering when in communal areas and unable to maintain social distancing or reduced contact with other students.

The school will provide 2 re-usable, washable face coverings to each student for this purpose or they can wear their own.

Students are asked not to wear a mask in classrooms due to the communication barriers created, however there may be some students who, for personal reasons, including extreme anxiety, wish to wear a mask at all times and will be allowed to do so. This is subject to consent from the Headteacher and full co-operation with all elements of mask hygiene and school behaviour rules. Parents/carers of a child who wishes to wear a face mask in lessons should submit the request to eleaman@colmers.school.

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I am really worried about sending my child back to school and don't think it is safe. What should I do?

If you do not think it is safe to send your child to school and are intending to keep them at home, please contact Main Reception or your child's Head of Year. We will talk through with you how we can help and support. We appreciate this is a big worry for some parents and carers and will do our very best to work with you to find a solution.

Water Bottles

Can my child refill their water bottle in school? (Amended from July 14th)

All students are asked to bring a bottle of water to school to drink during the day. Previously, we indicated we would not be able to allow students to refill their water bottles. We have reviewed this in light of guidance and are making provision for students to re-fill bottles in their Hubs, however as far as possible we request students avoid this unless absolutely necessary.

August 25th Updates

Uniform

Can students wear leggings to school on PE days or does it have to be joggers?

Students are asked to wear joggers or tracksuit bottoms over your PE kit on days where you have PE. Ideally these need to be black, blue or grey. If you wish to wear leggings under your PE shorts, this will be allowed but leggings on their own for school or for PE are not appropriate school wear.

What will happen if my child does not bring my PE shorts and just has joggers or leggings?

Your child will be allowed to do PE but will receive a sanction for having incorrect uniform.

What top should my child wear over my PE Kit on PE days?

Your child can either wear a school jumper (yr7 & 8) or alternatively a sweatshirt or hooded top

Keeping Warm

Classrooms will be ventilated by having windows and doors open. Can my child wear an extra layer to keep warm?

Yes – especially once the weather is colder, even though we will have the heating on we recommend students wear or bring an extra layer. This might be a t-shirt, vest or leggings under their uniform or an extra jumper / sweatshirt / hooded top. Coats may also be work if needed as our priority is to keep rooms ventilated in order to reduce the risk of virus transmission and keep everyone safe.

August 17th

Start of Term

Has the Year 7 start date been changed and how will you make sure everyone knows?

We have changed the date for students to return to school to give us time to prepare the site and classrooms. Year 7 start back on Monday September 7th. We will keep sending out details via ParentMail as well as on our website and social media platforms.

When will Year 7 meet their Form Tutor, their teaches and the other children in their bubble

Year 7 will meet their form tutors on the first day for an Introduction to Colmers session. Each year group forms one bubble. Students in Year 7 will be taught in two different teaching groups; one group for Maths, English Science and a different group for all of their other subjects. They will have one lesson a week with their Form Tutor.

Will children be told where to go on the first day ?

Yes, all students will get an email telling them the specific arrangements on the first day and there will be staff outside school and on all of the entrances and external areas to help students find their way on the first day. There will be a special meet and greet welcome for Year 7 on their first day and they will be given a tour of the school.

On their first day back, all students will have a lesson with their Form Tutor to help them learn about the changes in school and settle back in. They will then start their new timetables.

Attendance and the School Day

Will children be going to school from Monday to Friday?

Yes, all children will be in school every day, from Monday to Friday.

Why is the school day shorter this year? Are students getting less learning time?

Although the school day is shorter, students are still getting exactly the same amount of lesson time, which is 25 hours a week. We have reduced the school day because we cannot manage a daily time in Form Groups every morning as this would involve too much pupil movement. So the school day is shorter because of the change to tutor time.

Before and After School

My child is going to be bringing their younger sibling in the mornings, Will they be able to come in using the same entrance?

We have 3 different entrances and students will have to enter and exit via their own entrance zone even if they have to drop off or collect a sibling. Siblings will need to agree between them what arrangements they will stick to at the end of the day so they can meet up and go home together safely.

My child walks to and from school with their friend in a different year group. Can she still do this?

Government Guidance asks us to help students think carefully about social distancing on their way to and from school. There is nothing to stop students travelling together but they should always follow social distancing measures, whether they are walking or travelling on public transport.

Lesson Arrangements

The number of lessons in a day has changed from 5 to 3. Will the 1hr 40 minute lessons be split up between subjects or will students study one subject for the whole of the 1hr 40minutes?

Each lesson is 1hr 40 minutes, or 100 minutes, and will be for one subject only. The timetable covers all subjects over a period of 2 weeks.

How will you make sure students don't switch off in 100-minute lessons?

Teachers are working hard to plan longer lessons: some schools already have 100 minute lessons and at one time so did Colmers! We think longer lessons could be a real positive especially for practical subjects and we are thinking carefully about how we support students who may not adapt so easily to longer lessons. Staff will be considering how to keep lessons varied so that students engage and get as much as possible out of the longer learning slots.

Brunch Break

What provision is there for pupils who take their own lunch?

Students who bring their own lunch will be able to eat either in a designated covered area or the canteen during their brunch break.

Will the children be allowed outside for their brunch break after they have finished eating?

Yes, there will be a designated external area for each year group during the Brunch Break where they can go after they finish in the canteen or where they can eat if they prefer to eat outside.

How will you make sure that not all children arrive at the same time at the canteen for their brunch break?

Will there be different times for different years?

There will be 3 different brunch break time slots. 2 year groups will be on Bruch at one time and will be kept separate. The food available will be the same for all year groups but the menu will not be as varied as usual so that we can have the different serving points.

~~Why are children not allowed to refill their water bottles during the day?~~

~~In order to reduce student moving and mixing between year groups, we are taking water fountains out of use. This is a social distancing safety measure and we ask that all students bring a bottle of water with them to school every day.—Amended Sept 2nd~~

Uniform

If pupils are to wear PE kit to school on days when they have PE will they be able to wear tracksuit trousers to school ?

Yes, if students have PE they need to wear their PE Kit on that day. They will be able to wear a pair of black, blue or grey tracksuit trousers or jogging bottoms to school. Students in Years 7 & 8 will be able to wear their school jumper, students in Years 9, 10 and will be able to wear a warm top, preferably black, blue or grey.

Social Distancing and Hygiene

What distancing will there be in the classroom?

Students will sit at their normal desks. The Government Guidance is that we have all students back in school. We have reduced the number of groups students are taught in and students will not be in contact with students outside of their year group bubble. We have also reduced movement between lessons and time out of classrooms to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

What distancing will there be in the canteen?

The canteen will be used differently before school and at dinner time. At all times, year groups will be kept separate in the canteen and areas will be cleaned between usage if they are used by different year groups.

Will hot water be available in the toilets for hand washing and will there be hand sanitiser?

In each of the student toilet zones there will be hot water, soap and sanitiser. In addition, we have hand wash stations in the playground (cold water only) and sanitiser stations dotted all around school and in classrooms. We also encourage students to carry their own personal bottle of hand sanitiser if they wish to do so.

July 14th

Are there any changes to term dates? YE

Monday September 7th : Years 7, 11 and 12

Tuesday September 8th : Years 8, 9 and 10

I am very conscious of just how long it is since we have had everyone in school. I hope you will understand that we need the extra two days at the start of term to make the big changes on-site and prepare fully for our new operating model.

Are there any changes to the start of the school day? YES

The school canteen will be open from 8.00 – 8.30 a.m. for any student wishing to get breakfast or have a quiet place to sit before the school gates open at 8.30.

School gates will open at 8.30 a.m. Year groups will have distinct entrances:

Years 8, 12 and 13 North Zone entrance will be via the North Gate.

Years 9 and 10 East Zone entrance will be via the Belton Grove entrance

Years 7 and 11 West Zone entrance will be from the Bristol Road Entrance (The Fordrough)

Start of Day: Students should arrive in school by 8.45 a.m. and must be in their Period 1 lesson by 8.55 a.m.

Are there any changes to the end of the school day? YES

The school day will finish earlier than previously at 2.45 p.m.

Will students have to wear full school uniform? YES

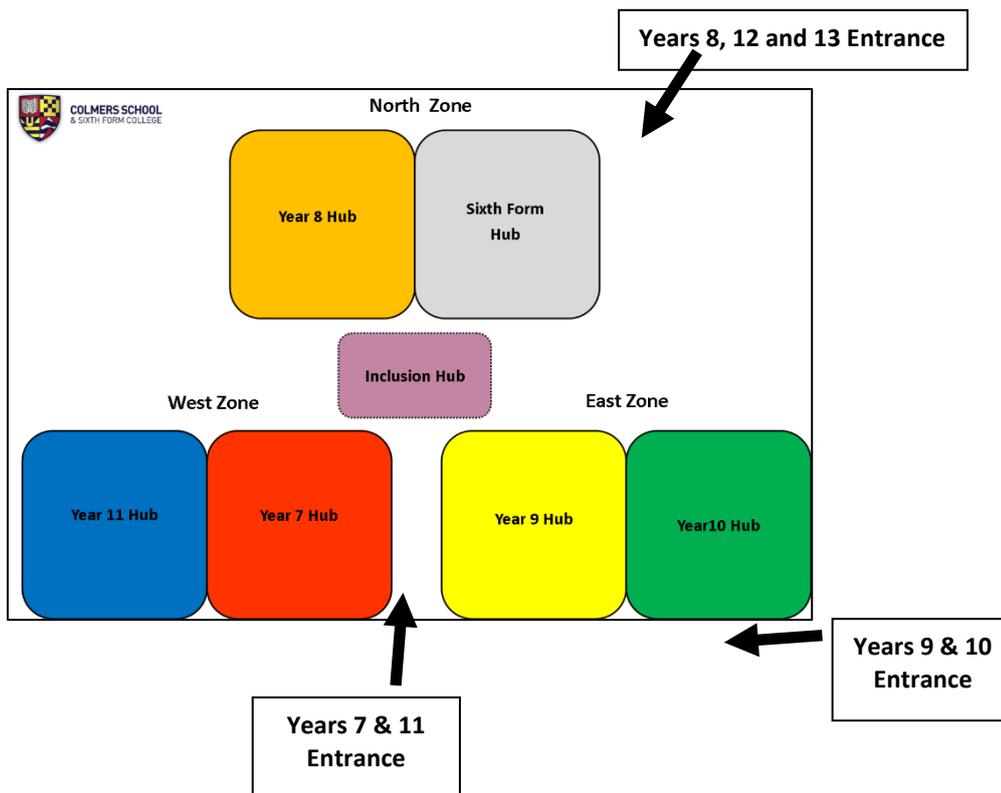
Students need to be in full school uniform. Once timetables have been issued, students will know the days they have PE and will be asked to wear their PE Kit on those days.

If you need assistance with school uniform, please contact School Reception who will be able to advise.

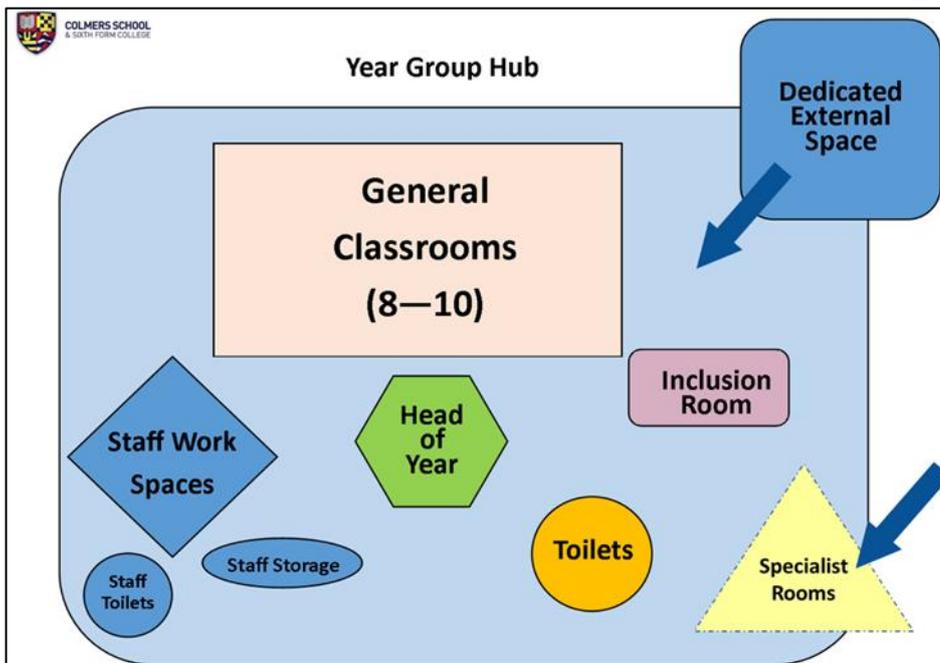
Is the way the school operates changing in September? YES

From September, our school will be re-organised into **Year Group Hubs**.

The school site will be split into 3 Zones – East, West and North. Each Zone will be home to two year group hubs.



Each Year Hub will have its own entrance, its own classrooms and its own student toilets. Students will not be able to mix with students outside of their Year Hub during the school day. Staff will move between Hubs.



Is the school still offering all of the curriculum subjects? YES

We are maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum in all year groups so your child will continue to study all of their subjects. This is really important to us at Colmers.

However, because students need to remain in their Hubs, there will be fewer practical lessons in specialist classrooms. We know this is only temporary so our staff are working hard to make sure that students still benefit from a range of interesting, inspiring and enjoyable learning experiences.

Students will be taught in fewer teaching groups so that they move around less – this will keep us all safer.

Will my child still have their Form Tutor and Head of Year? YES

Your child's Form Tutor remains your first point of contact. The time the form group spends with their Form Tutor will not be at the start of every day: instead, each form group will have one lesson a week with their Form Tutor, on a Wednesday afternoon. This will be where they study Learning for Life and this year, we will also have an extra focus on student well-being.

Your child's Head of Year will be based in their Year Hub and will continue to support the whole year group and Tutor Team.

Is the shape of the school day changing? YES

Instead of having 5 lessons every day, students will have 3 lessons a day that last 100 minutes each. This allows us to reduce student movement which increases safety in school.

Will students still have a lunch break? YES

During Period 2, students will have a **30-minute Brunch** in which they will be able to have a meal from our school catering provider. This is the only time during the school day that students will spend out of lessons.

During period 1 and period 3, students will have a ten-minute break in the lesson in which they may have a snack and take time out from work. They will be supervised by the teacher at all times.

Can students bring a snack and drink into school? YES

We really encourage you to send your child in with a snack and a bottle of water for when they have their ten minute lesson breaks in periods 1 and 3. This is especially important because lessons will be longer and hungry teenagers don't concentrate well! Please note students will not be able to fill water bottles in school.

Can students still top up their food accounts in school? NO

Students purchasing food in school will need money to be put on their account via ParentPay; they will no longer be able to put cash onto their school accounts from September. If this is likely to cause an issue, please contact School Reception for assistance.

Do students still need to bring in their equipment? YES

Students are expected to bring their own basic equipment including a blue or black pen, a red pen, a green pen, pencil, ruler and calculator.

Each student will be provided with a plastic wallet containing a mini-whiteboard and spare equipment for use in all of their lessons.

Students must have a school bag with sufficient capacity to hold their equipment, planner, a drink or snack.

~~Will students wear face coverings in school? NO~~

~~Current guidance for schools remains that students and staff are not required to wear face coverings in school. Students travelling by public transport must wear a mask and must have a secure plastic bag or container for storage on arrival into school, before then washing or sanitising their hands. Amended September 2nd~~

Will the school car park be available in September? NO

Our car park will not be available for drop off or collection of students. Please remember it is not safe to drop off or pick up your child on the Bristol Road or Belton Grove. To keep our students safe, we need those travelling by car to drop off and pick up either at Morrisons or at one of the side roads other than Belton Grove.