



Hamilton Grammar School  
Head Teacher: Graeme Sives



Education Resources  
Executive Director Tony McDaid

**Our Ref:**

**Your Ref:**

**If calling ask for:**

**Phone No: 01698 285777**

**Date: 5 August 2020**

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write in connection with the Executive Director's recent letter regarding the details of pupils' return to school next week. I share his view that the opening of schools is a positive move for our young people and families and I know that staff look forward to providing a measure of structure and support for pupils as we move forward.

As stated by the Director, the first week will be a soft start to induct pupils into the necessary new procedures that will govern life in and around school for the foreseeable future. We must all bear in mind that, while this is a welcome return to school, it is not a return to normal. There are aspects of school life that remain some way off, such as clubs and excursions; elements of the school experience that will remain limited in scope due to evolving advice, particularly in terms of senior pupils such as PE, Home Ec, Science and Technologies; and practicalities of school such as socialising, eating, hygiene and moving that will, by necessity, be compromised and different.

Students and families should take comfort in the Govt. document *Preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020* in terms of the public health aspect of schools re-opening. The evidence suggests the risk is low and schools will put in place additional measures to further mitigate even that level of risk. These measures are as follows:

**Opening Arrangements :**

- Tuesday August 11th                      Staff in-service
- Wednesday August 12<sup>th</sup>                      S1 and S4 in school
- Thursday August 13th                      S5 and S6 in school
- Friday August 14<sup>th</sup>                              S2 and S3 in school
- Monday August 17th                          All pupils in school

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## **Social Distancing**

In the light of what is a complex issue involving different levels of risk for staff, senior pupils and younger pupils, we will encourage this measure when possible as an additional layer of protection. Pupils will be aware of comprehensive signage on arrival and throughout the building. This will take the form of spaced directional arrows on floors and walls; no entry signs; instructions on stairwells and advice in lifts. These will assist pupils to enter departments from the correct access points and prevent mixing as far as we can. The signage is there to help, to remind and to keep us all safe.

## **Movement Plan**

A new one-way system covers the whole school. In short, the direction of travel on the ground floor is from the front of the school to the back, or A block to C block. The playground will have to be used to travel in the other direction (from C to A) on the ground floor.

On Floor 1 the flow is reversed and movement is from Science to English. Similarly, on Floor 2 the movement is from HE to Art before heading downstairs. There are anti-clockwise rotations around English and Maths on Floor 1 and around Humanities on Floor 2 to protect the circulation flow. Consequently, subjects can only be entered and exited by specific stairwells to ensure we are all moving in the same direction and avoid mixing. Pupils will have sight of diagrams and a video as well as a walk round as they familiarise themselves on their induction day.

## **Arrival at school**

No staggered start but, to avoid queueing, students enter the building via the playground and through different points of entry before feeding into a revised one-way system around the whole building. Students should hand sanitise on entry from the dispensers provided. The advice is not to congregate in the public spaces so when pupils arrive they should head straight to class.

To facilitate this flow, pupils should not arrive before 8.30am and congregate inside the building in groups as this may compromise safety.

Pupils heading to classrooms in A Block should enter via Door 1 and follow the signs.

Pupils heading to classrooms in B or C Block should enter via Door 4 and follow the signs.

ASN pupils arriving by taxi are unaffected. ASN pupils arriving on foot should enter at Door 1.

## **In corridors**

The new pupil movement system promotes a series of exclusively up or down stairwells and direction flows. This is another additional mitigation measure and pupils should respect these important safety instructions.

## **In class**

As an additional risk mitigation measure, seating plans will be reconfigured to maximise the number of pupils not facing directly across from each other. Movement around the room will be limited and interactions curtailed. Teachers will outline the new procedures and pupils must adhere to these instructions. Common sense and co-operation will be vital here.

## **Break**

S1 and ASN pupils will have early access to the canteen. There will be additional food kiosks in the Entrance Hall and Open Area to spread numbers across the campus.

## **Lunch**

S1 and ASN pupils will have early access to the canteen. Packed lunches can be taken to the Open Area. Other year groups will queue separately from 1.20pm to gain entry to the canteen. Socialising will need to take place outside as space will be extremely limited in the canteen to look after 240 new S1 pupils before they head outside.

With the exception of S1, pupils are free to head out of school for Lunch but should note they will need masks to enter local shops and cannot be permitted to bring ANY food or drinks back into the school building. They should hand sanitise at entrance points when leaving and re-entering the building and again in class.

## **General points**

The Director's recent letter (on our website) noted enhanced provision for cleaning, along with advice on parking/drop offs, school transport, public health protocols and guidelines on entering the school building so I will move past these areas.

We will continue to be a very busy school with limited options for students in terms of accommodation, particularly in times of poor weather. I have no doubt we will need to adapt further in the weeks and months ahead to respond to events on the ground. There are some areas outwith our control such as college provision and external providers regarding senior phase placements and bundles. Until we have definitive communication in this area as plans are firmed up to become commitments on this it may be that our senior students have gaps in their timetable. We have no facility to house groups of students together at these times and we may need to advise students to head to Hamilton Library or some such facility to home study at such times if appropriate. Similarly, we await national guidance in relation to certain practical subjects.

We are actively discussing approaches and/or alternatives in the following areas:

- We continue to consider alternative options for maximising space in the canteen, particularly in poor weather
- Face masks are a personal choice in school. I would ask that pupils attend with a supply of hankies in order to 'catch' coughs or sneezes. Elbows must be used otherwise
- Homework cannot be completed in the traditional manner in terms of handing in physical resources

A Frequently Asked Questions document is being compiled at HQ and will help with similar queries that have yet to be considered.

I would close by stating that all of these additional school measures are subject to ongoing review and adjustment in the light of experience, along with the associated risk assessments. As stated previously, life in school will be different and very far from normal for some time to come. We have already been apart for the best part of five months and we have much to do in terms of supporting

our families and young people. We are unable to make appointments with parents as usual and will let you know when we can move beyond conducting business by phone. If I could ask for one thing as pupils return, it would be that they work positively with staff to make our school a safe space for all of our learners by showing common sense in their actions around the school as we find our way collectively.

I hope to share updates for each year group before they return next week.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Sives'.

**G Sives**  
**Head Teacher**