



From the Headmaster - 9 July 2020

During this term, Sir Thomas Rich's has followed Government guidance and invited pupils from some year groups back into School. The detailed planning by staff, to maintain safety of pupils and staff whilst providing a high quality experience for their pupils, has really paid dividends and we know that pupils and teachers have enjoyed getting back into School and having face-to-face contact.

'Return to school' plans for September

It is clear that the scientific evidence shows that there is a much lower risk of children becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) than adults, and there is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults. Of course, there will still be risks while coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in circulation, and that is why we will continue to put in place a range of measures to protect pupils and staff.

Nevertheless, we are generally pleased that the Government has announced its intention to get pupils back to full time schooling in September.

On Thursday 2 July, the Department for Education published guidance for schools, and for parents and carers, on their expectations for the autumn term. The guidance can be found here:

- Guidance for the full opening of schools from the start of the autumn term:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>
- Guidance for what parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term:
<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>

The Government have also said they will confirm final plans on 11 August. We will be working hard to put plans in place to open to all pupils in all year groups from September.

As always, our plans will be based on providing effective education provision whilst maintaining health and safety for our staff and young people. If the plans are not changed prior to the new academic year, in some respects life at the School will look rather different from how it did when we closed to most pupils on 20 March. The differences are likely to include:

- A staggered start for pupils during the early days of the term to allow pupils to learn and settle into new routines.
- Staggered starts and ends of the day, and staggered break times and lunchtimes to minimise mixing.
- A change in the timings of lessons within the school day.
- Some changes to the curriculum to allow pupils to remain in bubbles whilst keeping the curriculum as broad, balanced and as rich as possible.
- A specific set of classrooms to use and some reduced access to specialist classrooms or equipment.

These changes are likely to be introduced following detailed risk assessments and action planning to ensure we comply with guidance. As part of our planned approach, the Government will require us to:

- Ensure that anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or has someone in their household who does, does not attend school – this means if your child, or someone in your household, has symptoms you should not send them to school.
- Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process so that cases can be identified and action taken – this means if your child develops symptoms, you should arrange for them to [get a test](#) and you should inform us of the results of that test.
- Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in school, in line with current public health guidance – this means your child may be asked to self-isolate for 14 days (based on advice from our local health protection teams) if they have been in close, face-to-face contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus.
- Ensure everyone at school cleans their hands more often than usual, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, and before and after eating – this can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser.
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene, by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- Undertake enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often.
- Minimise contact and maintaining distance, as far as possible – this is likely to involve a combination of social distancing and maintenance of 'year group bubbles'.
- Dispose of any temporary face coverings that may have been worn in a covered bin, or ask students and staff to place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag that can be taken home.

It is also clear from the guidance that schools may be asked to partially or wholly close at any time, and we will be

prepared to revert back to full remote learning or blended learning if directed to do so by Public Health England.

We will of course contact you in the summer holidays (after we have had a chance to respond to the advice on 11 August) with full details of our plans.

Whilst I am sure that we all agree that it is vital that pupils return to school, for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development, we are aware that a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice, because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). If your child is unable to attend school for any of these reasons, you should contact the relevant Head of Key Stage in the first instance:

Head of Key Stage 3: Rhys Davies rmd@strs.org.uk

Head of Upper School: Peter Daniell pmd@strs.org.uk

Head of Sixth Form: Matthew Lynch mtl@strs.org.uk

New building nears completion

I am pleased to report that work on our new building is almost finished, and we hope to be up and running by September. Back in April we announced that Clive and Sylvia Richards donated an extremely generous £70,000 towards fitting out the building, which is located by the tennis courts. The tennis courts and the driveway leading to the building have also been resurfaced. Many thanks of course to all those parents who have also donated towards the cost of providing the building with state of the art facilities; we are most grateful for your continued support.

As well as providing much needed classrooms, the building will act as a centre for developing business innovation and entrepreneurship, further improving our already excellent careers advice and guidance, for which we have recently been awarded the Quality Careers Standard; the national quality mark for careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Full details about the Richian 2020 Campaign, through which we continue to raise funds for the School's development, are available at: <https://donatemy school.com/sirthomasrichsschool>.

Mental health and well-being

Head of PSHE, Mrs Tomlinson, has set up an Instagram account for Year 9-12 students which you can find at www.instagram.com/strspshe. It is a private account, and Mrs Tomlinson will be setting tasks on Show My Homework and asking for comments on Instagram posts. Please do encourage your child to follow the account if they are an Instagram user. (As Instagram is for over 13s only, we have not extended the invitation to follow the account to our Year 8 and 9 pupils.)

A reminder that there is a CAMHS helpline available for children, young people and families who may require support and advice from the NHS: Telephone 01452 894300 (9.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday). Additionally, TiC+ counselling services can offer counselling remotely and details of how this is available is on their website www.ticplus.org.uk.

We are mindful that whilst many of our students will be cheered by the thought of going back to school in September, there will be some students and families who are worried about returning. We intend to build on our current pastoral provision to ensure that we support all our pupils to make sense of what has happened, contextualise their feelings and settle back in to school so they can continue to thrive.

Helping your child to manage study time

Elevate Education is hosting a free webinar on Tuesday 14 July giving practical strategies for helping children remain focused, beat procrastination and organise their time so they don't leave work to the last minute.

Event: How to help your child manage their time effectively and overcome distractions when studying.

Date: Tuesday 14 July 2020

Time: 6-7pm

Cost: Free

Sign up at: <https://get.elevatecoaching.info/uk/webinar-signup-14-july>

Celebrations

Finally, there is much to celebrate about Sir Thomas Rich's this term – Mrs Jones is preparing a virtual event in place of our usual summer concert and you will have received a number of emails already from Mr O' Neil regarding the virtual sports' event starting on the 13th, and we are planning to award colours in Key Stage assemblies in the final week of term. It has also been wonderful to welcome Year 6 pupils in to the School this week for the start of their Year 7 induction.

However, the less obvious and more hidden efforts of staff and students to keep going throughout this difficult time should not be underestimated. I am proud of the fact that where the school community has been presented with challenges, they have been met with patience, determination and resilience. And where we have been unable to carry out our usual activities we have adapted and innovated – from lessons on Teams to our series of live, virtual open mornings. The purpose of education is much debated: Is it to teach us the nature of reality, or to give us the skills to

deal with it? Is it to understand our world or begin to understand how we can change it? Of course, we know that education cannot have a single purpose; it serves multiple objectives, and the relative importance of each of these objectives can often be very personal. However, it is easier to achieve where there is a *real* sense of community, where there is a *palpable* sense of belonging and, as much as anyone, I have benefited from that *strength* of our school community at Rich's during these last few months.

Garde ta Foy

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