



From the Headmaster - 22 September 2020

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In March of the last academic year, I wrote to parents saying, in reality, COVID-19 will be with us until a vaccine can be formulated or an effective treatment discovered, and we will all need to practise social distancing and follow other measures for some time to come. At that time, I was unaware of how long we would only be partially open, the government's phased return to school plans and the drive towards full reopening of schools in September. I had, however, read Professor Neil Ferguson's report modelling the likely impact of public health measures to combat coronavirus which, of course, indicated that the world was facing the most serious public health crisis in generations. I knew then, as I do now, that school would look and feel very different for some considerable time to come. However, as I have indicated in my earlier emails this term, I have been so pleased to see that our core purpose of delivering great teaching and learning experiences has remained unchanged, and it has been really positive to see classrooms full of engaged and enthusiastic learners once more.

What hasn't changed is, as a school community, we will continue to respond to guidance as we receive it, with the very best interests of students, staff and other members of the Sir Thomas Rich's community at the heart of everything we do. As such, we have taken the decision to alter the timings of the School day, and to introduce the wearing of face coverings in certain high-traffic areas of the School from Monday 28 September. Please see below for details.

School day timings

I have come to realise that we must constantly evolve our provision as we continue to review procedures and processes in school and seek to manage the whole community on site in a safe environment. Therefore, from Monday 28 September, we will be adjusting the timings of the School day.

We will still be keeping staggered starts and ends of the day, and staggered break times and lunchtimes, to minimise mixing. Students will still have four lessons a day and follow the same two-week timetable as we aim to keep the curriculum as broad, balanced and as rich as possible. Year groups will still have a specific set of classrooms to use, and some reduced access to specialist classrooms or equipment.

The new start and finish times are:

Year 7 Arrival: 08:40 Finish: 15:00

Year 8 Arrival: 08:30 Finish: 14:55

Year 9 Arrival: 08:20 Finish: 14:50

Year 10 Arrival: 08:40 Finish: 15:00

Year 11 Arrival: 08:30 Finish: 14:50

Year 12 Arrival: 08:40 Finish: 14:55

Year 13 Arrival: 08:30 Finish: 14:50

Afternoon registration will now take place at the end of the day. This is to enable those students to leave to catch buses where necessary without missing out on the end of a lesson. This new arrangement will also help to make sure that pupils' afternoon attendance is recorded routinely.

Travel by school coach: School coaches are able to pick up students from 15:10; students will be allowed to leave their last lesson a little early in order to catch a coach if necessary. We have made these changes to minimise the time that students are waiting to catch their coach after school and to shorten lunch considerably – lesson time has been maximised!

Travel by car: I know some parents may not be able to drop off students five minutes before start time or pick up at the new finish time. Please make every effort to stick to the new timings; however, students can stay in year group bubble areas after the School day, and students should go straight to their form rooms on arrival in the morning. Parents of pupils are still not permitted to park nor drive on the School site.

Travel by bicycle: Students who cycle to school should go directly to the bike shed on arrival and then to their form room. Students should aim to arrive no more than five minutes before their start time.

Travel by service bus: I am aware that service bus times may not coincide with the new school day timings. Students should go straight to their form rooms on arrival.

Travel on foot: Students who walk to school should aim to arrive no more than five minutes before their start time

and go straight to their form room on arrival.

Face coverings in high-traffic areas

Due to the worrying increase in new infections across the country, and as a result of our internal review of corridor movement, we have made the decision to ask everyone in school to wear a face covering when using the dining room and corridors in the main block, i.e. the F corridor, the C (computer rooms) corridor, the SMT/Art corridor, the Q corridor and the Reception area. The new protocol will come into effect on Monday 28 September 2020. We will keep this under constant review.

I am informing you of this today so we all have time to let students know, and to manage this change in the safest way possible. Please ensure that your child has a suitable face covering to bring to school. It is also important that they have a sealed bag in order to store the face covering safely, to ensure it does not come into contact with clothing and surfaces in school. Students need to use hand sanitiser after taking their face covering off. Whilst we have supplies in every classroom, for convenience and the development of this habit it would be helpful if your child had their own, which they should use immediately once they have taken off their face covering.

Pupils will not be required to wear face coverings when in the allocated rooms for their bubble, or when they are outside. They of course may continue to do so if they wish.

If your child is exempt from wearing a face covering please email Mrs Ball with the appropriate details:
sdb@strs.org.uk.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the measures we have put into place, and any new ones we may have to introduce, will be with us for some time to come. To date, together in true Richian style, we have risen to the challenges admirably and we will continue to do so, always keeping the students' and the staff's best interests at the heart of everything we do.

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Matthew Morgan,
Headmaster

SIR THOMAS RICH'S

Oakleaze Gloucester GL2 0LF

01452 338400

info@strs.org.uk

www.strschool.co.uk

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