

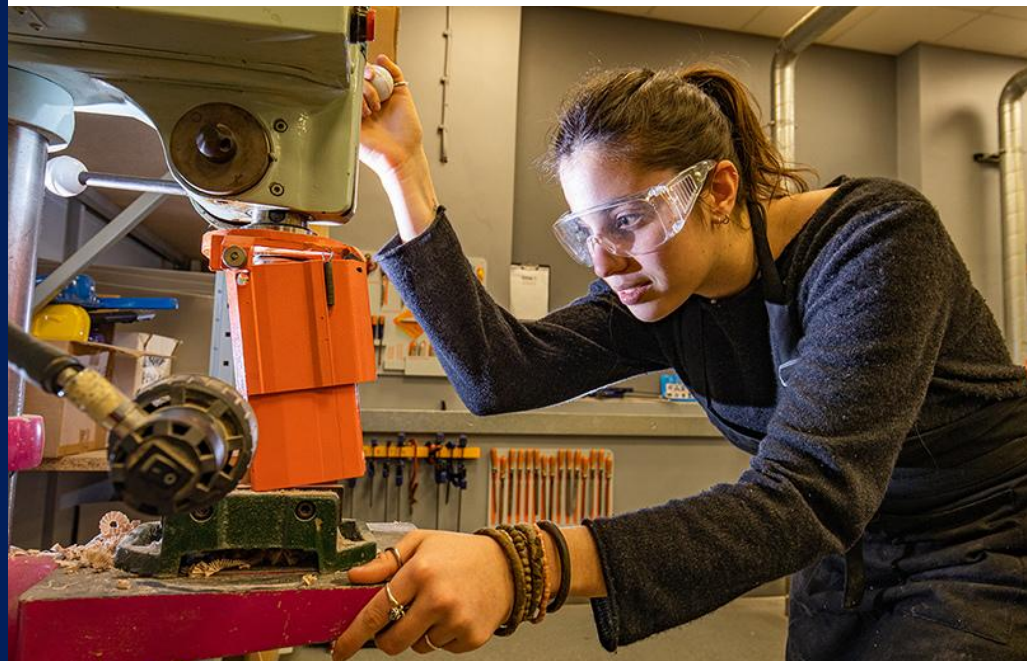


Returning To School Safely



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Introduction

The wellbeing of our pupils is at the heart of everything we do and all decisions must be of direct benefit to them. This is the second sentence of our strategic vision. They are not hollow words or “marketing speak”. Our aim in returning to school is to provide an education as close as possible to the Taunton School experience whilst keeping your children, and the rest of our community, safe. I am fortunate to work with colleagues who are committed to this aim and the following document sets out, in broad terms, how we aim to achieve this objective across the whole school. It will not be easy and there will be changes to protocols as we continue to adapt and as the relevant guidance changes. The Heads of each part of the school will write to parents before term starts to outline any specific protocols.

The education we offer will be focused on a blended approach to learning which is referred to throughout this document. Lessons will be provided face to face in classrooms but we will use outdoor space if possible. Each classroom will be fitted with technology to enable every lesson to be streamed so that it can be watched from home if necessary with the ability to record lessons. Larger gatherings will not be possible and so aspects of our remote learning provision will be retained for assemblies, chapel services, debates, scholarship talks etc. We are aiming to fully utilise the best of both worlds.

We have invested heavily in improved cleaning and hygiene, classroom technology, testing kits, training, medical provision and infrastructure in order to reduce the risk of infection but the most important aspect of our provision will be ensuring that your children are kept safe and feel safe. They will inevitably have concerns and our counsellors and mental health nurses will be on hand in the Health Centre. The pastoral teams will also offer the care that our youngsters have become accustomed to and many of our teachers have been trained in mental health first aid. We are very well equipped to care for the children as they return to school.

Our community is wonderful. Its members are caring, resilient, hard working and sensible. I have faith that we will face the challenge of returning to school safely and support each other in reducing the risk of infection. Personally, I can't wait to get back.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Lee Glaser in white ink, positioned to the right of his portrait.

Lee Glaser
Headmaster

The BSA charter and Taunton School's commitment to wellbeing, health and hygiene

As a committed and integral member of the Boarding Schools' Association, we will fully integrate all parts of the BSA's COVID safe charter which will place wellbeing, health and hygiene at the heart of our school from September.

[View the BSA's COVID safe charter](#)

These measures will help to ensure the safe return for all pupils and staff within an area of the UK with one of the lowest incident rates of COVID-19 infections.

[View the UK government COVID-19 Statistics & Analysis here](#)

Throughout our considerations we have referred to the Government's guidelines and in many areas we have gone beyond their recommendations.

[View UK Government guidance for opening schools](#)



Risk assessments

Ensuring the safety of all pupils and staff is the most important guiding principle within our organisation and an experienced group of senior leaders have met throughout the summer to further develop our risk assessments and school protocols. This work has been supported by external consultants to ensure the very best care can be offered.

Health centre arrangements

Our '24-7' on site health centre has been further developed to create a dedicated 'cold' health centre – for the normal day to day care for all pupils – and a separate 'hot' health centre to help manage any suspected cases of COVID-19. We have recruited additional nurses and health care professionals to ensure enhanced individual care can be offered for all pupils. With home comforts and food cooked on site in our brand new dining hall and kitchens, our pupils will continue to benefit from outstanding care.

Thornbury Nursing Services and NHS 'Track and Trace'

We have teamed up with Thornbury Nursing Services to train our nurses to deliver on-site testing. This will provide us with the ability to test boarders on their return to school and also to randomly test pupils and staff throughout the year thereby enabling us to be proactive in reducing risk around asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19. <https://thornbury-nursing.com/covid19-testing/>

This will complement our commitment to working with the NHS and their 'track and trace' protocols. We are fortunate to be located within two miles of the Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, the large regional hub for NHS services, where rapid testing for COVID-19 will enable us to quickly support symptomatic pupils and staff.



Classroom plans, campus flow, dining and hygiene

Our extensive campus works in our favour and will allow our pupils and staff to have the space and environment to feel at home and to feel safe in their surroundings.

Our new dining hall and kitchens have created a world-class facility and enable us to change our traffic flow thereby creating a pedestrianised zone in the heart of the school.

We have re-designed the curriculum to ensure there is less movement around the site and ensured that the 'bubbles' will spend less time in contact with other year groups. With an added emphasis on a blended approach to learning we can also continue to enjoy the benefits seen in our outstanding remote learning provision which in turn will facilitate increased contact time.

With the help of our newly-created pedestrianised areas we have been able to create better and safer movement around the school site which will be further complemented with one way systems and detailed information on how pupils and staff should conduct themselves inside buildings as they move between classes. With staggered lunchtimes we are able to cater safely for all pupils with enhanced cleaning in our new and enlarged dining hall.

We have invested in hand hygiene with sanitisers at every entrance point around the school site and this will be complemented with the recruitment of more cleaners to ensure a significant increase in cleaning regimes, more bins and ongoing training and education about good hygiene protocols for both pupils and staff. We are designing the start-of-year programme to ensure significant time is spent on education and allows pupils and staff time to walk around the school site so that they can absorb the changes and calmly reintroduce themselves to a physical school site.



Protective measures, PPE and cleaning practices

PPE is available for all those whom the risk assessment identifies as having a requirement. In accordance with the BSA Charter (and based on age appropriate guidance) pupils are welcome to wear a face covering and in many situations we will be encouraging all pupils and staff to do so if the risk assessment requires it of them: we wish to continue to build a culture of understanding which recognises global best practice. Face coverings will be available in the school shop.

Enhanced cleaning regimes will continue to be implemented throughout the school and clear information about symptoms of COVID-19 will be published and prominently displayed across the campus. The school has the ability to deep clean any room if any suspected or positive cases emerge.

Hand sanitiser will be available at the entrance to every building, in every classroom and pastoral area and pupils will be expected to have their own small bottle on them at all times. This will be supported through clear signage and education.

We will continue to take the temperatures of all pupils every day having invested in a thermal scanner which will be located at the front entrance to the dining hall.



Uniform and equipment required

We would like school to feel as normal as possible and therefore would like pupils to wear their normal school uniform: this will also enable them to have pockets in which to put their personal hand sanitiser, face covering and, depending on their age, a device to support their blended education. However, the guidance on changing rooms is quite limiting and so there will be days when it will be easier for your child to wear games kit to school. We will write to you closer to the time to give more detail on this area.

Lockdown, remote learning and our desire, and need, to keep offering a blended education (for example, some aspects of our co-curricular provision might take place remotely or will be live streamed to enable larger numbers of pupils to take part) will mean that we continue to invest heavily in our online learning platforms.

Pupils will need to ensure that their uniform is clearly labelled and should not be shared even within a bubble.



Remote learning

For some pupils, visas and travel restrictions will mean a delay in their arrival at school. Furthermore, some pupils may need to quarantine on their arrival in the UK or indeed, during the academic year. As a result, the school has made further investments in its online, remote learning platforms to ensure continuity of education for all pupils.

What to do if pupils, parents, or staff develop symptoms before returning to school

If a pupil, parent, or member of staff develops the symptoms of COVID-19 then they must stay away from the school site and follow governmental advice around self-isolating and testing. Please inform the school immediately and then we can support you straight away.

What will happen if a pupil or member of staff develops symptoms during school time?

The significant investment in health care facilities, training and testing will be supported with education for pupils and staff around clear protocols. If they develop any symptoms, they go to the dedicated health centre, where upon arrival they will ring the newly installed buzzer. This will alert the nurse on duty who will put on PPE and then assess your child's symptoms. If we feel they are symptomatic we will inform you and then engage with the NHS's 'Track and Trace' system. If your child is a day pupil, they will then go home and if they are a boarder we will work with parents to ensure the best possible care; the school is already set up to support this in school under the guidance of trained and caring professionals.

What to do if you or your family are shielding

If you or a member of your household is shielding a family member, please let the pastoral lead (housemaster/mistress or pastoral head of year) know as soon as possible. We will work with you to put in place arrangements to help ensure a safe return to school.



Returning to school as a boarder

When to return and how to return to school

All boarders will have been written to by the school to ensure a safe return in September. For pupils who need to quarantine:

- The school will be open from August 23rd and a pre-sessional course is available to help pupils prepare for their return to academic work in September
- Whilst we strongly advise pupils to quarantine in school we accept that some pupils may wish to quarantine outside school or they may find it difficult to return earlier than previously planned. In either scenario we ask that parents inform us to help us plan the start of term. If pupils cannot return until September 7th then we will aim to support their quarantine in school. If they return after this date, then we ask that they arrange their quarantine outside school.
- For boarders returning to school our health centre will medically assess them on arrival. Ideally they will be able to produce a valid, negative test certificate for COVID-19 which has been conducted in the last 48 hours before they travelled. If not, with your consent we will test using Thornbury Nursing Services.
- If parents wish to travel with their children we will arrange, on an individual basis, for them to safely meet with the school pastoral team and to see the school and boarding house. This will need to be arranged prior to arrival.

Arrangements in house

All necessary safety requirements will be implemented whilst keeping the warmth and home-from-home spirit that are at the heart of house life. Each house is completing its own individual risk assessment based on social 'bubbles', which will be created to ensure the track and trace system can work effectively, if required, with minimal disruption to daily routine. Under government guidance, social distancing will be required between bubbles. Alongside other aspects to our updated behaviour policy, failure on the behalf of a pupil to respect social distancing, hygiene and the wearing of face coverings may result in a serious sanction including being sent home.

Laundry

Alongside cleaning we are providing increased resource within our on-site laundry services.

Returning to school as a day pupil

Pick up and drop off

With our ongoing commitment to a broad and enriching curriculum and having our own bus fleet we are able to naturally stagger the start and end of each day without inconveniencing parents with prescribed drop off and pick up times, thereby supporting parents with their return to new work routines in September. We will need to zone drop off areas to support social distancing and the flow of traffic on site but we will provide further information closer to the start of term. If your child needs to stay later than 5:30pm we do ask that you inform your child's tutor by email because we have a duty to supervise and ensure social distancing when the academic bubbles move into boarding house bubbles.

School bus service

By having our own dedicated school bus fleet, we can support our wider co-curricular offer and we can continue to offer personalised travel to and from school each day. We have continued to invest in this crucial area of school life with enhanced safety and hygiene protocols for pupils and for the drivers. Ian Almond will write to all parents before the start of term to fully explain these protocols.

Changing arrangements

The government guidance around changing is not, at this stage, very clear so we are continuing to take a cautious approach to the use of changing rooms at school. To support this, we will be flexible around school uniform and if pupils have a PE lesson or Games session then they are welcome to come to school and to attend academic lessons in their school PE kit. Staff in each part of the school will write to parents and individual needs will be supported and catered for.



Bubbles, social distancing and integration between boarding and day pupils

We will be using a two bubble system. Bubbles help to group pupils together who have similar interests. During the academic part of the day pupils will be arranged by year group(s), depending on their age and part of the school. This will help ensure the ongoing integration between boarders and day pupils. After 5:15pm these bubbles will then move to home bubbles with day pupils leaving the school site and boarders moving back into their on-site homes. For these boarders we will continue to offer post prep activities based around their houses and supervision will enable them to mix with their friends from other houses.

Social distancing will be encouraged within bubbles and rules will be implemented, alongside supervision, to ensure social distancing is enforced between bubbles.

How classes will look

Whilst remote learning has been very successful all the teachers will be excited to see pupils back in their classes. However, the benefits of a blended approach to teaching and learning will continue alongside the return to the classroom. For example, it will be possible to record lessons and therefore all pupils can continue to benefit from being able to go back and review classroom learning in the comfort of their own home or study area.

The movement of pupils and staff on the school site will be reduced and the layout of all classrooms will be altered to enable social distancing and to reduce face to face contact between pupils. When pupils and staff do have to move between lessons the use of one way systems, clear protocols around hand and classroom cleaning and appropriate use of face coverings (based on age) will all help to reduce anxiety and the worry of cross infection at these busy times.

How enrichment activities will look

Community time which includes Chapel, Assemblies and Enrichment talks will all continue as 'live events' with either individual bubbles being present or pupils will watch them live in their classrooms or houses with their tutorial groups to enjoy and discuss.

How co-curricular activities will look

We will continue to offer a diverse and enriching range of clubs and activities.

Music and Performing Arts will continue, but will be appropriately socially distanced. One-to-one music lessons will continue with measures in place to reduce the risk of infection, and if appropriate these may be delivered online. Ensemble rehearsals will also continue, with rules preventing the sharing and storage of music and stands. Implementing distancing measures will mean more outdoor space will be utilised for both lessons and creative clubs. We have already calendared for many of our creative art events to happen live at school and we hope to enable parents to attend. However, if this proves difficult to risk assess then we will continue to live stream concerts, ensembles and performances, an area of school life we have worked so hard to preserve and continue to enjoy throughout lockdown.

Sports practices and competitive matches will continue by following government and national governing body advice appropriate to each sport. Under current guidance, use of shared equipment will not be possible and therefore pupils will be required to bring their own, clearly labelled personal equipment such as rackets, hockey sticks etc.

Student led clubs will continue but will be supervised to ensure social distancing is observed.

We hope to also support ongoing non-residential trips to enrich and broaden the academic and co-curricular life of the school. These will go through enhanced risk assessment processes and parents are always able to talk through these protocols prior to any trip.

How free time will look

The chance to spend free time with friends enjoying our beautiful, open campus is one of the joys of a Taunton School education. We will ensure this will continue albeit with greater supervision enabling pupils to enjoy each other's company as they grow and make new and exciting friendships within the rich and diverse community we all cherish.

Contingency plans

With a highly successful remote learning platform already in place, significant investment in the health centre and with increased staffing we have been able to develop contingencies which will allow for continuity of education for all pupils should things change.





Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss the contents of this document.

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Taunton School has made a commitment to the Boarding Schools' Association Safe Schools UK Initiative.

