



23rd February 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I hope, albeit with unfortunate weather and lockdown restrictions in place, that you were still able to enjoy a well-deserved and enjoyable half term break.

In my last letter to you just before the half term break I said we should be looking forward to this term with optimism and applied hope that schools would be able to fully re-open so we could continue supporting our young people in the very best way we can face-to-face in school. With Spring in the air, yesterday's welcome news that schools are able to reopen from the 8<sup>th</sup> March and the announcements relating to the roadmap out of lockdown mean we have lots to be positive about.

We really can't wait to see the return of all our young people and see our school full again. It's only a building when none of the pupils are in it. Although the Department for Education have updated their operational guidance for schools for the wider reopening from the 8<sup>th</sup> March not a great deal has changed from the procedures/risk safety management control measures we already had in place before we went into lockdown. The key difference is around the expectations relating to asymptomatic testing for all pupils on their return. There are significant logistical challenges in relation to managing the required onsite testing whilst also returning to the delivery of the best face to face educational provision.

As such, we are not yet at the point where we can share our full return plans with you. Please be patient as we plan how best to manage this. Although we would prefer not to, we may well need to have a phased return for different year groups - the testing isn't as easy to facilitate as the Prime Minister suggests - it's the most challenge part of returning. We will of course be back in touch with more details as soon as we are able to once our plans are finalised.

**Key messages in this letter:**

- **Update on Wider Re-Opening of Schools after 8<sup>th</sup> March Guidance**
- **Asymptomatic Testing**
- **Summer GCSE and A Level Exams 2021**

**Update on Wider Re-Opening of Schools after 8<sup>th</sup> March Guidance**

You will have heard the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday that all schools in England will return to face-to-face education from Monday 8th March. The link to the full updated guidance effective from 8<sup>th</sup> March is below:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963541/Schools\\_coronavirus\\_operational\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf)

A summary of the key points from the DfE's guidance released last night is as follows:

- **Secondary schools will fully re-open from the 8<sup>th</sup> March to all pupils** (with possible phased returns in place to assist management of pupil's return with LFD testing).
- **Rapid testing using Lateral Flow Devices (LFD)s will support the return to face-to-face education by helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.**

For secondary school staff and pupils we are moving to a home testing model (for pupils, following the first 3 onsite tests). The lateral flow devices used have received regulatory approval from the MHRA for self-use. Home test kits will be available for all staff on return. Once pupils have been tested 3 times at school (all taking place between 3-5 days) they will then be provided with home test kits for regular testing twice a week thereafter. Returning secondary pupils will be tested three times on site and then again once at home in the first two weeks after reopening. During the week of March 8, pupils will only be expected to return following their first negative test result. Testing remains voluntary but strongly encouraged.
- **Attendance becomes mandatory for all pupils from 8<sup>th</sup> March** (except for those Self Isolating or Shielding as they remain Clinically Extremely Vulnerable) in line with the schools phased return arrangements.
- **Clinically extremely vulnerable children:** We know from growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list (SPL) as appropriate, following review with their clinician.

The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally. All 16 to 18 year olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated.
- **Face coverings:** In addition to the existing guidance stating face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises where social distancing cannot easily be maintained, it is also **recommended that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during other learning activities unless social distancing can be maintained.**

This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons. As you will recall, this was already part of our expectations/the safety control measures we introduced in Terms 1&2.
- **Practical subjects, including PE, Music, Dance, Drama and DT can continue** as long as appropriate measures are undertaken.

We have already reviewed our risk assessments for these subjects to ensure we have the appropriate measures in place for them to continue as guided.
- **After school activities, including additional subject support sessions and extra-curricular sport activities are able to resume.**

### **Asymptomatic Testing**

You will recall from my letters on this matter before Christmas that I fully support the principle of everyone participating in an asymptomatic testing programme to help break transmission links by identifying those who may be carrying the virus unknowingly.

To support us in our return to school/testing arrangements planning I would be really grateful if the approx. 400 parents who didn't complete the testing consent form (previously sent to parents in mid-January) could do so **by 3pm on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February**. Please complete the form for your child(ren) even if you don't consent for them to be tested.

Our Experience of testing with our Key Worker Section that we started in January shows us that children don't mind testing at all. In fact, they greatly appreciate the feeling of safety it gives them and the confidence that school is a safe place for them. Staff too feel reassured by the added safety and protection that such screening affords them.

### **Consent Form:**

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=lkgtroUnF0KgrlcqzzWX-bFrq8sKPDVDjoqitwJuZgNUMkFVVkIRRjVZQUZWU0w5TEM3WjNFTk9USS4u>

### **Summer GCSE & A Level Exams 2021**

We are still waiting for news of the outcome of the Exams 2021 consultation whereby the government will set out further detail on its adapted processes for awarding grades to those in their final legs of GCSE and A Level studies. As soon as we hear further news this will be communicated with students and parents in Year 11 and 13 then to ensure they are fully aware of the current position. Until that time, rest assured we will give Year 11/13 as many opportunities as possible to demonstrate evidence for their grades.

### **And finally,**

I appreciate I have once again given you a lot of information to absorb and you might be frustrated that you don't yet have the entire plan for reopening; please bear with us. Rest assured we are doing all we can to provide a safe, well-planned and well-delivered return to school for your child(ren).

Look after yourselves and those around you.

Take care



Rod Bell  
Headteacher