



8th January 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I continue to wish that you and those around you remain well.

I hope you have been able to readjust to the ways of living, working and learning within the constraints of the national lockdown which came into effect this week.

Following on from my recent letter on the 31st December and in response to Monday's and Wednesday's government announcements I wanted to get in touch to provide you with an update on the following:

Key messages in this letter:

- **National Lockdown and partial school closure until February half term (at the earliest)**
- **Summer 2021 Exams**
- **Year 13 January Vocational Exams**
- **Vulnerable and Critical Worker Child Provision**
- **FSM Vouchers**
- **National Lockdown Restrictions Reminder**

National Lockdown and partial school closure until February half term (at the earliest)

Following the announcement from the Prime Minister on Monday evening and further information received on Wednesday from the Education Secretary, here is what we know so far:

- During the period of national lockdown, schools will remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers only (please see notes, below) and all other children are expected to learn remotely.
- Summer 2021 Public Exams will not go ahead as planned. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly. (Please see notes below)
- Public vocational exams and assessments scheduled to take place in January can go ahead as planned, 'where schools judge it right to do so.' (please see notes, below)
- The DfE are going to provide more support for FSM and additional devices
- Clinically extremely vulnerable people should shield again and should not attend work, school, college or university and should limit their time outside.
- The coronavirus (COVID-19) testing programme should be continued to enable weekly testing for staff and students attending school and daily close contact testing for those staff and pupils attending school identified as close contacts. This programme also allows schools and colleges to test pupils on return.

Although we are bitterly disappointed that we have been asked to close our doors to all but a few of our students we understand the importance of limiting school attendance so as to reduce the number of contacts children have with those in other households. We look forward to the time when we can reopen fully and welcome all our students back.

Summer 2021 Exams

The government have confirmed that it does not consider it possible for A level, GCSE or vocational exams to go ahead fairly this summer. They have stated that they are asking Ofqual, the national exams regulator, to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly. At this point, we have no indication about how this is going to operate. As soon as we receive guidance, I will be writing to all students and parents to provide the details about how the school will be acting upon the guidance.

I appreciate that this is a very difficult situation for students and their families. At this point, whilst we await confirmation from Ofqual, this leaves a degree of uncertainty around what the alternative grade awarding arrangements will look like but we can only assume that grades will be awarded using something similar to the process of Centre Assessed Grades used last year.

By way of reassurance, we learnt a great deal from this process last year and it is important to state that Centre Assessed Grades are the combination of different forms of assessment ranging from school work, homework, ongoing coursework and any mock examinations and end of unit assessments that have taken place. No one singular assessment will be used to determine an overall grade. This is why, until we know more, it is crucial we continue to teach and assess the examination programmes of study and vital that Year 11 and Year 13 students continue to show the positive attitude to learning that they have already displayed this year. Carrying on with their studies as they would have if the exams were still to take place will best ensure that they are fully prepared for the alternative arrangements when they are announced by the government. Consequently, students still have 'everything to play for'.

Students might think, wrongly, that all their hard work up to this point preparing for their final exams has been a waste of time. As stated above, this is not the case. In addition, students need reminding, of course that the ongoing acquisition of knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge is one of the fundamental aims of education. Learning lasts forever and all their hard work developing their skills and knowledge up to now and over the coming months, matters for their futures.

We hope that the next stage of the students' learning journey will be free of the interruptions of the last year and the completion of their current courses will provide them with the best possible opportunity to be successful in the next stage of their lives.

The Year 13 mock exams which were originally rescheduled to begin on the 11th January will now be delayed until we have more information regarding how students will be assessed in the summer. Mrs Cooper will be writing to Year 13 students and their parents separately to provide them with more details in relation to this.

This is obviously a rapidly evolving situation which we are trying to respond to as efficiently as possible. As we receive more information from Ofqual and exam boards about the amended vocational grade awarding process we will continue to update students and parents. However, we anticipate that this detail will not be available any time soon. Thank you for your forbearance in this matter.

Year 13 January Vocational Exams

You will be aware that the awarding body for vocational exams and assessments also announced on Wednesday that schools and colleges were now responsible for deciding whether or not vocational exams scheduled for this term should proceed at their Centres.

Having both considered feedback from students and teachers, and sought assurance from the awarding body that students' grades will not be impacted detrimentally if they don't sit their scheduled exam, I have taken the decision to cancel the forthcoming CTEC exams scheduled for next week.

I appreciate that this will be disappointing for students and teachers who have been working hard to prepare for these exams, and apologise for any inconvenience caused by this decision, but in putting the safety of our students first and considering the heightened Covid related anxiety many would have been experiencing if we went ahead with exams next week, I thought this was in the best interests of our students.

Grades will now be determined by some form of teacher assessment. It is therefore imperative that students continue to attend all lessons via Microsoft Teams and complete all assignments and coursework. These will be pivotal in informing teacher's assessment of students' knowledge, skills and competencies.

As with the A Level and GCSE Grade awarding process, when we receive further clarification about the vocational awarding process, we will update students and parents.

Vulnerable and Critical Worker Child Provision

The guidance is clear that only vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers can currently attend school in person for on-site supervised provision and **"parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can."**

I have enormous appreciation for my staff who continue to come in daily to ensure we provide a safe place for our vulnerable and critical worker children. By maintaining this provision for those who need it most we can play our part in the ongoing fight against coronavirus and take great pride in knowing that by staying open for these few we are enabling our critical workers to continue to deliver the crucial frontline services that are central to our effort to tackle Covid-19

- Vulnerable Pupils: Parents of children who meet the DfE's Vulnerable Pupil Criteria have been emailed directly to enquire if their child will be taking up the offer of on site supervision. If you believe your child meets the vulnerable pupil criteria and you wish to take up the offer of on-site supervised provision but you haven't received an email, please contact Mr Smith via csmith@corsham.wilts.sch.uk
- Children of Critical workers: In order for us to arrange appropriate supervision and allocate sufficient resources to meet the need, parents who meet the DfE critical worker criteria (see below) who need to take up the offer of on site supervised provision for their children and haven't yet needed to do so please contact us to let us know so we know to expect your child(ren) via email to MChapman@corsham.wilts.sch.uk
- Critical workers are those who work in:
 - o Health and social care
 - o Education and childcare
 - o Key public services (including the justice system, religious staff, charities delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting)
 - o Local and national government (those who are involved in delivering the coronavirus response or essential public services)
 - o Food and other necessary goods
 - o Public safety and national security
 - o Transport
 - o Utilities, communication and financial services
 - o Roles critical to EU Transition

- If your child has been supported by us in school this week but, due to changes in your shift pattern/occasional home working days, you are now in the position to be able to supervise your child at home we would appreciate you letting us know so we know not to expect them.

FSM Vouchers

We are continuing to provide parents/guardians of FSM students with a weekly £15 Voucher through our voucher provider, schoolvouchers.com. For those FSM students attending school either as a Key Worker or Vulnerable Student, vouchers will be provided on a pro-rata basis; this is because whilst in school, a meal is provided. Vouchers are sent weekly and the attendance data recorded in school will be used to determine when vouchers are sent i.e. if you received a £15 voucher week commencing 4th Jan 2021 and your child attended school for 3 days during this week and will attend for 2 days next week, week commencing 11th Jan, then you will not be entitled to a Voucher for the week commencing 18th Jan. This system will ensure that we are not funding twice for our FSM students.

National Lockdown Restrictions Reminder

On Monday 4 January, the Prime Minister announced that due to rapidly rising cases of COVID-19, England will be going into a national lockdown, until at least February half term. This means you must stay at home. The single most important action we can all take is to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. You should follow the new guidance immediately and this means you must not leave your home without a 'reasonable excuse.' The law has been updated to reflect these new rules which can be read in full via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>



COVID-19 cases in Wiltshire continue to rise sharply with the case rate per 100k increasing from 266 to 320 in the last seven days. It is vital that we all continue to play our part in protecting ourselves and each other.

Please remember, hands, face, space. Stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our parents and carers once again for their support of the school through this period and apologise that I have not been able to personally respond to all the amazing messages of gratitude received in the last two weeks. I will repeat our absolute commitment to both recognising and understanding the impact this period has had on our students, and working with you to do all that we can to ensure that we limit its short and long term impact on their lives.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rod Bell'.

Rod Bell - Headteacher