

March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We will be writing with a variety of information over the course of this week, but the key thing I wanted to share as soon as possible was the return to school dates and testing schedule for your child. Your child should attend school on their allotted day, arriving in time for the school day to start at 8:50 as normal. They will attend form and lessons as normal in their timetabled rooms and spaces, and will be tested at some point during their first day. Once they have attended on their first day, they will remain in school, and will continue to attend school as normal on subsequent days, unless testing positive for Covid-19, in which case they will of course be asked to self-isolate in line with government guidance.

As you know, we are required to offer tests to all students who opt in to testing 3 times during the weeks they return to school. The tests must be 3 to 5 days apart.

This causes us some difficulty in creating a timetable to get students back in as quickly as possible, whilst also allowing capacity to complete the follow-up tests once students have been tested on their first day back. It is a logistical challenge, and one that will challenge our test-centre's capacity.

We are currently planning for students to return in whole year groups on the following dates:

**Monday March 8<sup>th</sup>**

Years 10 and 11

**Tuesday March 9<sup>th</sup>**

Year 13

**Wednesday March 10<sup>th</sup>**

Years 7 and 12

**Friday March 12<sup>th</sup>**

Year 9

**Thursday March 18<sup>th</sup>**

Year 8

Once students return on their first day, they remain in school unless identified as a positive case as part of their Lateral Flow tests. We will therefore have the vast majority of students back on the school site by Friday March 12<sup>th</sup>. I am aware that year 8's return seems quite delayed, but there is simply no way around this given the capacity of our testing centre, which can at it's limit do around 250 tests per day. Once students have returned, the deadline of having to repeat tests 3 and 5 days after their return made getting all year groups back earlier an impossibility, if the testing is to be effective.

All students at home from the 8<sup>th</sup> March will continue to interact with the remote curriculum.

We are eager to get all students back into school as soon as possible at the same time as keeping our entire community safe, and this is the best way we can achieve this. If of course we can increase our testing capacity as the week progresses, we will endeavour to move testing days forward.

Students should attend in PE kit on the days they are timetabled to have PE. If they have PE periods 1-4 then they should check the forecast as, if they get wet we will enable them to change so they can bring uniform with them. On dry days though, or where they have PE periods 5 and 6 there will not be access to changing facilities.

I also stated in the letter sent on Friday last week that we would be following the Department for Education guidance and **recommending** that students and staff wear masks in lessons where social distancing cannot be maintained.

I am well aware of the divisive issue of masks for some parents and students, so I want to be entirely clear: We have worked together as a community for the best interests of the community since the very start of the epidemic, and we will continue to do so now. There are staff and students who form part of our community who have underlying health conditions, or indeed as I do, have clinically vulnerable family members at home. We simply do not know the challenges or health factors that some of us may be facing. The message from the government is very clear that we should be extra-vigilant as we return to school, and ensure all measures that we can possibly have in place are in place for the protection of all. No one wants further lockdowns or restrictions any longer than necessary.

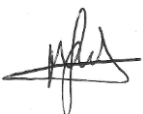
The guidance from the department for education could not be more clear in recommending the use of masks in classrooms where social distancing is not possible. I shall be wearing a mask throughout the day, around the site and in lessons, not just to keep myself safe, but for the benefit of the school community, in the same way that I wash my hands regularly and I keep my distance wherever possible, as an act of collective protection.

I am also aware that there are a number of staff and students who cannot wear a mask for a variety of medical reasons, and this again in line with department for education, and national guidance will be entirely for staff and students to decide.

**No student or member of staff will be challenged for not wearing a mask**, we are simply **recommending** they be worn in line with the guidance we have been offered and in line with our duty as an employer to protect our staff.

If you wish to contact your child's form tutor to inform them that for a medical reason, they will not be wearing a mask, please do so.

With best wishes,



Mark Grady  
Headteacher