

February 2021

Dear Families,

I hope that you all continue to be safe and well in these challenging times. No doubt you will be aware that Public Health England and the Government have reviewed the infection rate in England and agreed for us to fully reopen our schools to students from Monday 8th March.

In secondary schools the reopening comes with the challenge of a full rapid lateral flow testing programme that is required to take place ahead of the return to school. We are expected to run three tests, 3-5 days apart, for each student beginning **from** Monday 8th March as an additional safety control measure. I am sure you will understand that this is a huge logistical challenge for schools to organise and to run safely. The Government has committed to doing this to support a safe return and to ensure that students are familiar with the process so that they can then conduct tests at home under the supervision of parents/carers. Students will return to school following the completion of their first test unless you, or they, decide not to consent. We would encourage you to support with the testing programme as this will make the environment safer for everyone. The key worker school will run up to and including Friday 5th March but will not run from Monday 8th March. This is because we need to give at least 3 days break to reform new school 'bubbles'.

We will require consent for each student to be tested. Please complete the consent form via the link that will be sent via My Ed App / test message as we will be unable to test students without this being completed. The full details of the arrangements for testing and timings will be sent to you early next week, once we have received the consent details of how many tests will be required.

From Monday 1st March, staff will set recorded lessons or work as remote learning – there will not be any live lessons from this date. We think it is important to give students time to adjust to the new arrangements and to complete any work from the current remote learning arrangements. In addition to this, staff will need to come into the building next week to ensure their classrooms are set up safely and resources ready for the face-to-face learning. Staff may also need to be available to support the testing programme. Students will begin testing as soon as is feasible and we expect all students to be back into school for face-to-face learning by Monday 15th March.

Most arrangements that students were familiar with in the autumn term will continue to be in place. However, recent guidance now requires students to wear a face covering whenever social distancing is not possible. Our students have been very supportive of the requirement to wear masks when moving around school, this requirement will apply in all classroom settings as well until at least Easter. Students will be able to remove their masks when they are in outdoor spaces at break and lunchtime. We will send a link to an information video that we will send out next week to support parents and students with the [guidance](#) and what to expect when they return. The risk assessment documentation is also being updated and will be published on our website shortly.

Our year 11 and 13 students have had an anxious time due to their formal examinations being cancelled. We expect to hear more about the arrangements for grading this week (Thursday 25th February) but expect also that Exam Boards will also need to provide clarification on how each individual board will apply the guidance. We will communicate this to you as soon as we know more.

Throughout the last half term our staff have worked very hard to develop a comprehensive remote learning routine that students have engaged with brilliantly. This has meant that we have a very clear understanding of where students are and how they have coped with life in lockdown. To reassure you, our approach will be a calm and reassuring one – we are not going to immediately put pressure on students to 'catch up' lost learning or to achieve targets. We know that it is going to take time to readjust and we know how important it is that our children feel safe and happy before they can engage effectively with the learning. Please do let us know if you or your children are experiencing particular difficulties so that we can support in the best way possible. This time has provided unprecedented challenges to our children but they are not going to be disadvantaged by it – we are going to do everything in our power to make sure of that.

We are very much looking forward to having all of our students back in school and thank our staff, students and families for their support, patience and understanding.

Kind regards,

Stuart Jones
Executive Headteacher

Ms Nicola Mason
Head of School