

3 Mar. '21

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s):

We are writing again to provide some more information regarding the return to school next week and the assessment / qualification arrangements for students in years 11 and 13.

Return to school

In preparation for the return of students and staff, we have undertaken a rigorous review of our whole-school risk assessment, incorporating the new government guidelines and informed by our commissioned health and safety service. A copy of the revised **COVID-19 Risk Assessment and Action Plan** and the revised **Social Distancing and Infection Control Policy** can now be found on our website – accessed from COVID-19 Updates. The policy document effectively serves as a summary of the most important areas in the risk assessment; there is more detail in the risk assessment document. As the time-scale for revising these key documents has, once again, been so tight (with government updates being published on a daily basis), we will continue to make revisions as required, alerting you to significant changes. If you have any queries or suggestions, then please do let us know.

The main features of the arrangements, from 8 March, are summarised below:

- As you would expect, we have taken every effort to strengthen our controls in preparation for next week and beyond. Enhanced cleaning arrangements are in place and students will be reminded to wash or sanitise their hands regularly, including on entry to classrooms.
- Classrooms will be well-ventilated and students, who will be expected to wear their full school uniform, would benefit from wearing an extra layer of clothes underneath.
- A new requirement is that students will be asked to **wear a face mask during lessons**, as well as in other areas inside the school. They will not need to wear a face covering when they are outside the school buildings. Where there are good reasons for students to be exempt from this requirement, they will be issued with an exemption card. The guidance for wearing face masks will be reviewed at Easter.
- Consistent with guidelines, we are continuing with the 'year group bubble' arrangements, in order that we can meet expectations that a broad and effective curriculum model is in place. The staggered start, break, lunch and end times will also be in place.
- As communicated, there will be a programme of onsite lateral flow device (LFD) testing (starting from Thu. 4 March), through which students will be tested three times (with intervals of 3-5 days), followed by home testing twice a week. There will also be home testing arrangements for staff. The LFD tests help to identify asymptomatic carriers of the virus and therefore improve the safety of the school site. We are delighted that a very high proportion of parents/carers have already given their consent and booked their sons/daughters in for this testing.

Please note that Government guidelines stipulate very clearly that **students are required to attend school**, unless they are clinically extremely vulnerable (as evidenced by a letter from a medical professional). Where there are specific needs and anxieties, we will manage them, with parents/carers and students, on an individual basis. Contact should be made with the relevant year office.

Assessment / qualification arrangements

On 6 Jan. '21, the Government confirmed that students due to take examinations this summer would be awarded grades based on their teachers' assessments. A consultation was then conducted on how this should be done and we now have some (but not all) of the detail. What we do know is summarised briefly below:

- The grades will reflect the standard that students are 'working at', rather than being predictions of what they would have achieved if they had sat the exams. Grades will also be based on what students have been taught, and not what they have missed.
- Where non-exam assessments (NEAs) have been completed, or are 'in progress', these should contribute to the final grade.
- By the end of March, exam boards will issue some assessments for use in class, which can be used to contribute to teacher assessments. Students entitled to access arrangements (e.g. extra time) will receive their entitlement.
- Earlier assessments (including mock exams) can also be used to inform teacher assessment, but it is considered that more recent evidence will usually be more representative of student performance.
- Before grades are submitted, students will be told what evidence is being used to assess them. They will also get the opportunity to indicate any mitigating circumstances that they think might affect their grade.
- The grades will need to be submitted by 18 Jun., but some time will be needed before this for internal and external moderation / quality assurance.
- Students will receive their examination grades (earlier than usual): on **Tues. 10 Aug. for A level results**; and on **Thu. 12 Aug. for GCSE results**. Results for vocational courses (e.g. BTECs) will be issued either on these days, or before them.
- Students will have the right to appeal – with a review by the school and, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome, by the exam board.

We understand that students in years 11 and 13, and their parents/carers, will be concerned about what these arrangements will mean in practice. In consultation with subject leaders, Mr. Cain (Deputy Headteacher) is working hard on a framework that can be applied across the school to ensure that we are able to make fair judgements for our students. We are still awaiting more detail from examination boards (promised to be provided by the end of March), but we will get more information to you before then. It may help for you to know that we have decided that there will be no in-class assessments (contributing to the final grade) in the first two weeks, i.e. before Mon. 22 Mar. '21.

Finally, thank you once again for working with us so positively and constructively in these really challenging times. We worked really hard to put strong programmes of work in place – both for online learning, through live lessons, and through our on-site programme for vulnerable students and the children of key workers. We are now all really looking forward to seeing all of the students back in school and in their classes.

Best wishes:

Stuart Jones
Executive Headteacher

Nicola Mason
Head of School