



ST/KJP
24th February 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope you and your family are well. Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we collectively handle the challenges posed by Covid-19.

You will no doubt have seen the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday outlining that schools will re-open for all students from Monday 8th March with testing in place for students. The Government has given secondary schools the discretion to determine the phased return for their school over that week. Therefore, our return will be staggered to support the testing process and transition of students back into school. We will confirm the actual return date for each year group to lessons next week but this will be a phased return from Wednesday, 10th March, with all students anticipated to be back in school full-time by Monday, 15th March. The current provision for the children of key workers will continue until each year group's return to school.

We are very much looking forward to having all students back in our school and want to assure you that – as has been the case throughout the coronavirus crisis – we will ensure the school is as safe as it possibly can be. Your child's health, and the health of all our students and staff, is always the most important factor for us.

There are a number of specific points about the full return to school that I wanted to set out in this letter, which I hope are helpful.

Testing

From Monday 8th March we will begin the programme required to offer all our students 3 rapid lateral flow tests, spaced 3 to 5 days apart. The Government has committed to doing this to support a safe return to school and also to ensure that all students are familiar with the process required to then conduct tests at home under the supervision of parents/carers. There will be more details to follow about the testing process once these have been confirmed. Conducting up to 4500 individual student tests is a huge undertaking and will require an intensive programme supported by at least 25 members of staff on each testing day.

It is not compulsory for students to take these tests, however, the Government are encouraging it as effective testing helps stop the virus spreading and will mean schools are as safe as possible. If you are happy for your child to be tested, please complete and submit the consent form (one per student) on our academy website under the parents tab, or via this link [Consent Form](#). This is the same link that was sent out in our letter on 8th January so if you have completed the form already, there is no need to resubmit it. If you are unsure as to whether you completed the form, we would recommend that you complete it again as we are unable to test students without consent. If we do not receive a consent form from you then we will assume that you do not want your child to participate in the testing programme and they will not receive a test. The deadline for submitting the consent form is **Wednesday 3rd March**, after this time we will be unable to make the logistical arrangements required to test individual students before their return to the academy. If at a later date you decide that you do want your child to receive a home testing kit, then please contact the school office.

The Department for Education will shortly provide us with the testing kits, which can be used at home, and we will update you on the collection and delivery of these kits in due course.

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From the 8th March:

- Students who have consented will be tested at school by trained staff three times in the first two weeks back
- After these tests, students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home
- Students will be allowed to attend lessons as normal after their first negative result
- Parents and carers will be required to report results for schools to record. We will confirm how this system will operate in due course
- Students who develop Covid-19 symptoms should self-isolate immediately, as now, according to Government guidelines.
- If a student tests positive for Covid-19, they must self-isolate for 10 days from the day after they tested positive or the day after they start to have symptoms
- Non-consenting students will not attend on testing days and will only need to be in when the full year group are invited back in for lessons

Lateral flow tests are quick and easy to administer, using a swab of your nose and throat. Results take around half an hour from testing and will be shared directly with staff and students participating. For under-18s, staff can oversee the swab process.

Masks

The Government has recommended the use of face masks indoors – including in classrooms – unless two-metre social distancing can be maintained. This policy will be in place until at least the end of this term and will be reviewed after the Easter holidays. It applies to students, staff, and visitors (including parents), unless they are exempt from wearing one. We therefore encourage all students to ensure they have a supply of suitable face masks ready for the resumption of school on 8th March.

Exams

We expect to hear more later this week about the arrangements for grading linked to Year 11 and Year 13 courses this year. We will share this information with students and parents/carers at the earliest opportunity.

Education

Remote learning will continue for all year groups until their date for a full return to school. When students return to school most arrangements will be similar to routines established in the autumn term. Through regular communication, staff in school have a good understanding of life in lockdown for many of our students and we know that our students have had a range of experiences. When students return to school we understand that some students may have thrived while some may have struggled; the most important thing for us all is to take positive steps forward. It is a journey rather than a race to re-engage with life in school.

I will write to you shortly with further details about how the phased return will work for your child. We very much look forward to having our students back in school and would like to thank all of our students and families for their support and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stuart Turnbull
Principal

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