

18th December 2020

Letter to all FCAT parents from Sean Bullen (IDOE) regarding the latest Government decisions for the re-opening of schools in 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am not wanting to make any political comments, but at about 1pm yesterday we heard about plans that affect the return to school after Christmas.

The plans do not affect our Primary schools or our students at Armfield or Unity in the Primary phase of our two all through schools. Those students return as normal on Monday 4th January 2021. We look forward to welcoming them back, in the anticipation that 2021 is a much better year for all of us.

However, the Government has issued new guidance for students of Secondary school age. These are our secondary aged students at Armfield and Unity, and clearly also all our students at Aspire, Garstang and Montgomery.

In the week beginning 4th January 2021:

- **For all those Secondary settings, school will be open as normal for all Year 11 students (*not applicable to Armfield Academy*) and also for the children of key workers and vulnerable students, who will be following the same curriculum and timetable as the students working from home on our virtual learning platform.**

Therefore, we would expect the vast majority of our Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students to be completing remote learning at home. Each school will see that this happens. They will return to school on 11th January.

The Government has made these decisions for 2 reasons. The first is to help control the spread of the virus. The second reason, which is not as yet a certainty, is to help schools plan for more regular testing of students and staff. If that does happen, we will clearly communicate thoroughly about that in the New Year. I think we cross that bridge when we come to it, let us all try to have as safe a Christmas as possible, but also share technological moments with our friends and families.

We would like to once again apologise for the late notice of this announcement. However, we are responding to Government directives as operationally, practically and as our schools capacity allows in the current climate.

On that subject we acknowledge your patience and support with this unprecedented situation. Both with this, and the recent decision to finish normal learning on Thursday 17th December 2020, we have looked to follow Government guidance to help control the spread of the virus and to be as safe as humanly possible. Of course, if the guidance alters, then we will be in touch again.

You might also wish to keep an eye on the school website.

Thanks again for working in partnership with all our schools. Once again we wish all our parents/carers and children a happy Christmas and a much better 2021.

Sean M. Bullen

FCAT Interim Director of Education