

31st December 2020

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

Dear Parent /Carer,

As we did indicate was a possibility in the letter before Christmas of 17<sup>th</sup> December, there has been a change to government guidelines on the return to school of secondary aged students in 2021.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 effect everything has been pushed back a week, I believe for 2 reasons. Firstly, the concern about the new variant of Covid, which seems to be spreading quicker and secondly to give secondary schools more chance to prepare for the mass testing system, that the Government is hoping will be introduced into secondary settings.

In the week beginning 4<sup>th</sup> January :-

**For all those in Secondary settings, school will be open as normal only for the children of key workers and vulnerable students, in a similar way that we were open for those students at the start of the pandemic.**

Students in all Year groups will complete remote learning, which will be organized by school

From 11<sup>th</sup> January :-

For all those in Secondary settings, school will be open as normal for all Year 11 students and also for the children of key workers and vulnerable students.

From that point 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.

**All remaining students( 7, 8 ,9 , and 10) should now return to school on 18<sup>th</sup> January.**

As mentioned above the Government has made these decisions for 2 reasons. The first is to help control the spread of the virus. The second reason, is to help schools plan for more regular testing of students and staff. We will clearly communicate thoroughly about that in the New Year. Senior leaders at our schools will begin to plan for those arrangements from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January and we will be in touch with you as soon as possible. Due to our 5 secondary settings being different, we cannot guarantee these arrangements for testing will all start at the same time, although our leaders will do their best in challenging circumstances.

Can we once again apologise for the late notice of this announcement, but we are responding as quickly as we can to Government announcements.

On that subject we once again acknowledge your patience and support with this unprecedented situation. We recognize that some of you will experience inconvenience, but we have looked to follow Government guidance to help control the spreads of the virus and be as safe as possible. We all want all our students in schools as much as possible, however we have had to follow the Government guidance.

**Of course if 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. On a final more positive note, at least we have the vaccine now being used in the area, which does give us some hope for the future.

Sean M. Bullen

FCAT Interim Director of Education