

Tuesday 23rd February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I know we have been waiting on the announcements about the return to school and it was heartening to hear yesterday that we can begin to look forward positively. As you will be aware the Government announced that secondary schools will be allowed to begin to invite students back from Monday 8th March. The Department of Education has issued advice that states:

- *Secondary schools are able to plan for **a phased return over the week of 8th March** to allow students to be offered coronavirus (COVID-19) tests as they return to the classroom. Schools will have discretion on how to phase the return of their students over the week beginning 8th March to allow them to be tested on return.*
- *After an initial programme of 3 tests in school or college, students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home.*
- *Staff and students in secondary schools are advised to wear face coverings in all areas, including classrooms, where social distancing cannot be maintained as a temporary extra measure.*

Phased Return

We are now in the process of planning the phased return for all students, which will commence from 8th March. The approach will be similar to the way we returned in September 2020. This will enable students to refocus on the school's health and safety routines, to feel supported back into school and, this time around, to access testing on their return.

We hope to be able to write to parents at the start of next week with the full details of the return dates and times for each Year group within school.

Testing

We feel it is important to keep parents informed on this additional element to the phased return. As you may well be aware, up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. Given this fact, the government has asked schools to test all students before they return to the classroom.

These COVID-19 tests, known as 'lateral flow tests' are designed to pick up any positive cases where individuals are not showing any coronavirus symptoms. We have been using these tests since the start of January; testing staff and the students that we have had onsite in the Key Worker provision. In fact, we have carried out over 1,500 tests to date and significantly these tests have identified a number of asymptomatic cases that would have otherwise gone undetected for some time. As a result, we were able to take quick action and stop additional spread immediately, thereby keeping our school and wider community safe. Whilst this test is voluntary, we would strongly encourage all students to take advantage of this additional measure to help reduce transmission.

The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy to use. Students will take a swab from the throat and the nose, which is then tested. The whole process, from registration to testing to issuing results, is undertaken by our own staff who

have received special training. They will ensure students feel relaxed and comfortable, answering any questions that may be asked. Results will be shared directly with students and with parents or legal guardians. Positive cases will be identified within 30 minutes of testing and immediate action taken. We have attached an instructional leaflet with further information, frequently asked questions and our privacy notice which outlines the process and explains how personal data will be processed, stored and destroyed.

We intend to test all students before they return and will send out appointments in due course. **However, before any appointments can be offered, we need parents and carers to complete the consent form; this can be done very quickly online** by following this link: <https://www.chorltonhigh.manchester.sch.uk/parents/consent-form>

Ideally, we would like all consent forms to be returned **no later than Thursday 25th February**. Please note, we need **a separate consent form for each child**.

We encourage all students to take part in this testing programme. It will help us to identify any positive cases quickly and will hopefully assist in reducing the number of students who have to be sent home to isolate due to contact with positive cases. As always, we are committed to keeping as many students and staff in our school as safe and secure as possible.

If you require any additional information or information in any other language or format, please call school on 0161 882 1151 or email admin@chorltonhigh.manchester.sch.uk.

Exams

In respect of Year 11 GCSEs, we are still waiting for the Department of Education to publish the outcomes of its consultation. We have been promised this information by the end of February and it is hoped that it will help us give both staff and students some clarity of what is expected. We do understand that our Year 11s have been under enormous pressure yet they have continued to impress us with the way that they have responded to the situation and how they continue to engage with their learning. Hopefully, we will have clarity over how examination courses will be assessed by the end of next week.

We all wish to see our students back in school as soon as possible and are working hard to establish a tight phased return which will allow us to offer the required testing to everyone as well as ensure students feel fully secure with the health and safety routines in and around the building. We intend to talk to students about the processes in assemblies, throughout next week.

With very best wishes
Chorlton High School

