



2 March 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

I am writing with important information regarding the full re-opening of school in the week beginning Monday 8th March. We are very excited that students are returning to school and want to offer clarity regarding our plans, what is expected of students and a number of points that it would be sensible to discuss at home prior to your child returning. I know that you will have been following the latest announcements from the Government regarding the "Roadmap" for leaving lockdown and the return of our students to school. I appreciate that these are uncertain times, and the need for clarity regarding our plans. I hope the following information regarding our return to school from 8th March provides you with the clarity and reassurance needed. Every school faces different challenges, and our plans and the guidance offered below are based upon Durham Johnston's unique context. The focus for this letter is the key information that all members of our community need to be aware of as they prepare for next week. We will provide additional information on the support that we will offer for exam year groups and any other important decisions separately.

The Government has asked schools to open from 8th March onwards and to also offer Lateral Flow Testing for all those who want to access a test and have completed the required consent form. Like all other secondary schools in Durham, we want to offer a consistent return to school after testing has taken place and to avoid the need for students to wait in schools for tests. This is in line with the majority of other secondary schools in Durham and we feel will lead to an orderly return to school.

Date	Key Information
Friday 5th March	Year 12 and 13 Lateral Flow Testing to take place. Other year groups will continue with a combination of live lessons and remote learning.
Monday 8th March	Year 10 and 11 Lateral Flow Testing to take place. Other year groups will review the work that they have completed since January and will prepare to return to school.
Tuesday 9th March	Year 7, 8 and 9 Lateral Flow Testing to take place. Other year groups will review the work that they have completed since January and will prepare to return to school.
Wednesday 10th March	All students return to school. An extended form period will be followed by normal lessons.

1. Lateral Flow Testing

Lateral Flow testing will take place on the following dates. Testing will take place in the Sports Hall and you will be met by school staff. Parents and carers are not allowed to enter with students, but can wait in the school car park.

Friday 5th March – Year 12 and Year 13 students who have consented to a test will be given an allotted time.

Monday 8th March – Year 10 and Year 11 students who have consented to a test will be given an allotted time.

Tuesday 9th March – Year 7, 8 and 9 students who have consented to a test will be given an allotted time.

Key points

- A robust risk assessment has been carried out and appropriate safety measures are in place to ensure that students are supported through the testing process in school. Testing is designed to pick up on any asymptomatic students – those who may be infected by the Coronavirus, but who do not show any symptoms.
- **Lateral Flow Testing is not mandatory.** Based upon clear Department for Education guidance, we will transition to home testing very quickly and it is fine to opt in at that point. Transitioning to home testing is very important, as it will allow the school to fully re-open and to prioritise the education of all students without interruption.
- **Those who do not consent to a test in school can still access home testing.** The Government has announced that they intend to share information regarding family testing in the coming week.
- We will contact all parents who have consented to a test directly. We will offer a time slot for students to attend for their appointment only and they should return home.

2. Preparation at home on Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th March

It is important that all students prepare for a full return to school on Wednesday 10th March. We will not offer live teaching on Monday or Tuesday and would encourage students to review the work that they have completed remotely and to make sure that they have everything that they need to return to school.

Key points

- All students should use these two days to prepare for their return on Wednesday.
- All students should make sure that they have the correct uniform. Please contact us privately if you need any additional support with your child's uniform.
www.durhamjohnston.org.uk/about-the-school/uniform
- Students should check that they have the necessary equipment for a return to school.
- Please add money to your child's account if they intend to purchase a school meal. As in the autumn term, we will continue to provide hot, nutritional meals on a daily basis. Not all schools are able to do this, but we feel it to be very important for our students.
- The children of Key Workers have been contacted with regard to provision on both days. Please contact Mrs Bell if you have any queries or need additional support.

3. The full re-opening of school on Wednesday 10th March

We will reopen to all students on Wednesday 10th March. Students have been working remotely for a significant period of time and we feel that it is important that all students return quickly and safely.

Key points

- **All students will return to school on Wednesday 10th March and need to be on the school site by 8.20 a.m. as normal.** School transport will operate a full service and normal service from that date. Please remember that masks are compulsory on both public and school transport. Bus drivers can deny access to transport if students do not wear masks.
- The number 48 will still transport students to and from the school site.
- Please remember that the school does not have provision for parents to drop off or pick up their child from the school site. Please be considerate of the school's neighbours and those living near to the school when you drop off or pick up your child. Also be aware that local convenience stores will not allow access to students in years 7 to 11.
- There will be an extended form period on Wednesday morning. We will reissue timetables, a safety update will be shared with all classes and there will be virtual assemblies to explain our next steps to all students. Lessons will begin as normal from period 2. We will help our students to familiarise themselves with their timetable and the rooms within their protective bubble.
- Please read through the information very carefully so that your child is confident regarding the similarities and differences associated with a return.

4. The full re-opening of school on Wednesday 10th March - what will be the same for students? What will be different?

All previous safety measures in school will continue to be in place to ensure our students' safety, including regular hand sanitising, social distancing within our context, ventilation where possible, year group bubbles and separate entrances and exits. In support of a recent government recommendation for all secondary schools, we will also be extending the wearing of face coverings (masks), currently in place for students and staff in all indoor communal areas, to all indoor environments, including classrooms, until Easter, when this will be reviewed. Please contact the school privately if you have any questions regarding face coverings.

Key points - what will be the same?

- We will be using exactly the same in school controls. Students will line up in the same way and will be met by form tutors. They will have their lessons in the same classrooms and use the same spaces for lunch and break times. They will use the same entrances and exits.
- On the days that students have P.E, they should still come to school in their PE kit.
- Classrooms will be as well ventilated as possible, meaning that it might be cold. Students should wear their uniform, but can also wear black or grey V-Neck jumpers or their PE tops. Year 11 and 13 can wear their leavers' hoodies.
- Students need to pack carefully for each day, as it is still not possible to access lockers.
- We will continue to use seating plans. This is important as it allows the school to accurately identify close contacts if we are informed of a positive case.

- We have exactly the same policy regarding mobile phones. They should be turned off as soon as students enter our school grounds and not turned back on until students have left the school site. We will confiscate phones that are seen, used or heard. If you need to contact your child in an emergency please use the main school number.
- Students should not wait for friends outside of school. They should not walk home in large groups. We have a staggered end to the day between 2.35 and 2.55 p.m. and students need to leave sensibly and quickly.

Key points - what will be different?

- The most important difference relates to face covering, as noted above. The Department for Education have strongly recommended that they are worn in all indoor spaces until Easter. However, we are aware that there is debate around this issue and we respect the different opinions that people may have. As a school our main purpose is to educate and support students and we will maintain a very clear focus on doing exactly that. We understand if parents would like to engage with local medical professionals or politicians with regard to the use of masks/face coverings, but we will continue to prioritise the education of our students above all else. It is worth noting that the vast majority of our students quickly became used to wearing masks in all communal areas and brought spare masks into school in case of loss or damage.
- **Year 7 and 8 students need to come dressed in their PE kits on the day that they have PE, as the changing rooms are currently being used as our on-site testing centre.**
- After school clubs and activities will return much more quickly on this occasion. The PE department intend to have sports clubs running from the week beginning 15th March 2021.
- The Department for Education will issue guidance this week on home testing kits. We will provide an update as soon as possible.

5. What to do if your child has any of the symptoms associated with Covid-19?

Whilst transmission in the local community has declined significantly, there is still the likelihood that positive cases will occur in County Durham. Please do not send your child to school if they have any of the symptoms of Covid-19. If symptomatic, please use the following County Durham flowchart step by step:

[Can my child go to school today?](#)

Key Points

- Please do not send your child into school if they are unwell or symptomatic. Follow the County Durham guidance for parents.
- If your child is symptomatic and tests positive for covid-19, please inform us immediately. We will then follow Public Health England advice and will trace close contacts quickly. We will provide work via MS Teams for all those who are asked to self-isolate.

We have very robust systems in school and will communicate quickly and regularly, but many other areas of national life are still being heavily restricted to protect the NHS and those who are vulnerable. Whilst cases are down, please encourage your child to avoid unnecessary risks.

I have tried to provide a significant level of detail so that all members of our school community are confident about their return to school. As in September, there may be teething problems and things that we will need to modify and refine. We have a proven track record of being adaptable and safeguarding our students. I would encourage you to contact us directly if you have any concerns.

Please also encourage your child to be considerate and kind to others. All families will have had different experiences since January and will arrive back in school having faced different circumstances. As I have noted on a number of occasions, all members of our school community should avoid speculation and prioritise being kind, thoughtful and helpful when engaging with others.

I would like to thank you again for your support and encouragement during these challenging times. I know that by working together, we will ensure that each of our students is given every opportunity to maximise their potential between now and the end of the school year. I am looking forward to our whole school community being together again. The main purpose of schools is to provide an enjoyable education safely and our students need to be back for that to be fully realised.

Yours sincerely,

A J. O'Sullivan

**A J O'Sullivan
Headteacher**



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