

23rd February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

I hope this letter finds you well and that you had a restful half term. I wanted to give you an initial indication of reopening plans as early as possible given last night's government announcements, including some more detail from the DfE's operational guidance update which was emailed to schools last night.

### **Return dates and lateral flow testing**

You will know that March 8th has now been confirmed as a date from which all year groups can return to face to face teaching. A summary of the government's evidence base for reopening schools on this date has been published [here](#). It is important to note that schools are also being asked to asymptotically test students (using lateral flow tests) before their return to the classroom. We have therefore been directed to **phase the return of students during that week**, so that we can manage the number of students passing through our test site at any one time. **To clarify: this means that whilst every year group will not be able to return straight away at the same time on Monday 8th March, we will be able to have the whole school back in the building by the end of that first week.**

The key points to highlight to you from the DfE's operational guidance are:

- "Secondary schools should offer pupils testing at an on-site [testing site] from 8 March. Testing and return of pupils **can be phased during the first week** to manage the number of pupils passing through the test site at any one time. [Schools] **should offer 3 tests**, 3 to 5 days apart."
- "Pupils should return to face-to-face education **following their first negative test result.**"
- "Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your phased return arrangements." (i.e. remotely)
- "After an initial programme of 3 tests in school...students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home."
- "The lateral flow devices used have received regulatory approval from the MHRA for self use."

As you can imagine, testing every student is a huge logistical challenge for us, but we are obviously really looking forward to having students back in the building safely. Testing is voluntary; however, we would encourage everyone to participate in the asymptomatic testing programme to help break transmission links by identifying those who may be carrying the virus unknowingly. It is important that students are initially supervised whilst swabbing for the tests to make sure they are doing it correctly. This is why testing will **initially** take place on-site; students will then be asked to start testing at home following their third test.

In order to manage this phased return and ensure we prioritise exam year groups first, **students will therefore need to come into school for their first lateral flow test (this will be a 5 minute appointment slot) the day before they return to school for lessons.** Doing this means we can potentially avoid sending students or classes home to self-isolate on day 1 if we get a positive lateral flow test result. Their second and third tests will be spaced out over that first fortnight; they will simply come out of a lesson for their 5 minute appointment slot once they are back in school full time.

I will need to write to you again with more details regarding the testing procedure and how this will work next week, but in the first instance, there is a parental consent form attached. Could I ask that these are **returned to school by Monday**



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**1st March.** If you do not have the capacity to complete the form electronically, you can email the school to confirm your consent/provide details and/or call the school office to confirm details over the phone.

The timeline for our phased school return from the 8th March is therefore as follows. **Where the box is shaded in yellow (“lateral flow test 1”) students are still learning remotely at home;** they are only coming into school for their lateral flow test appointment.

Date	Y12 & 13	Y11	Y10	Y9	Y8	Y7
Mon 8th	Lateral flow test 1 (invited in for 5 min appt)			Remote learning at home		
Tues 9th	In school for face to face teaching			Remote learning at home		Lateral flow test 1 (in for 5 min appt only)
Wed 10th	In school for face to face teaching			Remote learning	Lateral flow test 1 (in for 5 min appt only)	In school for face to face teaching
Th 11th	In school for face to face teaching			Lateral flow test 1 (in for 5 min appt only)	In school for face to face teaching	
Fri 12th	In school for face to face teaching. Lateral flow test 2			In school for face to face teaching		

Another way to look at this, for clarity, is as follows:

	Test date (test 1/3)	School return date for face to face teaching
Year 12 & 13	Monday 8th March	Tuesday 9th March
Year 11	Monday 8th March	Tuesday 9th March
Year 10	Monday 8th March	Tuesday 9th March
Year 9	Thursday 11th March	Friday 12th March
Year 8	Wednesday 10th March	Thursday 11th March
Year 7	Tuesday 9th March	Wednesday 10th March

**Lessons week beginning 8th March**

This will potentially be a tricky week for us as a school as we deliver a hybrid model for the first time, with some cohorts in school and others still at home depending on which day it is. Students will also obviously have to miss some lesson time in order to come in for their first test. For this reason, students may find that there are more recorded lessons this week (as opposed to ‘live lessons’) than they have been used to.

**Face masks and bubbles**

The DfE are now recommending that "face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social



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distancing can be maintained" **until Easter. We will be following this guidance in school from March 8th.** Students are used to wearing masks in corridors; we will be explaining this change and expectation for mask wearing in classrooms in return assemblies and briefings. Students will be encouraged at break and lunchtime to be outside, where they can take masks off. Bubbles will stay as they are, with students zoned as they have been up to now in separate parts of the building. The start/finish times and break/lunchtimes remain unchanged. Again, I will outline more details in my next letter regarding return arrangements in order to try and preempt any questions and concerns.

**Exams 2021**

Frustratingly, schools have been provided with **absolutely nothing** from Ofqual or the DfE yet regarding Year 11 and 13 exams. An email from Gavin Williamson sent yesterday to schools said "Ofqual and I will...be setting out very soon further details of the alternative arrangements to exams. This follows the consultation which received over 100,000 responses, including from so many of you and your students". "Very soon" - I am sure you will agree - sounds particularly vague and non-committal. Regardless of what is announced, we know that Year 11 in particular will be keen to complete some more assessed practice as 'evidence' towards final grades and we will be putting this in place on their return (which means they will complete some form of assessed work in each subject before the Easter holidays). The current plan is then for Year 11 to sit another round of mock exams after Easter (week commencing 19th April) in order to act on feedback and again provide further evidence of progress.

**Key worker/vulnerable children in school**

These groups will continue to come into school as they have been up to March 8th. They will be tested slightly earlier than the rest of the school. **From March 9th onwards, they will return to school on the same date as the rest of their year group peers.** This means that **Monday 8th March will be the last date** on which we will be catering for our key worker/vulnerable group in school. Please note that as the school reopens fully, we will be very limited in our capacity to cater for key worker and vulnerable children on Tuesday 9th, Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th March. Therefore, you must contact the school if you have no alternative arrangements that can be put in place on these dates.

There is a lot to take in here; hopefully I have been as clear as possible about return dates and the plan for testing. I am sure you will still have lots of questions; **I will seek to answer these in another letter early next week**, explaining the testing process in more detail. In the meantime, if you have any urgent queries please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school; you can also email me directly if needed. There is still time to complete our **parent survey** if you have not done so already; the link is on our website [here](#). While you are on our website, please take the opportunity to watch our **6th form film** if you haven't seen it yet (you can find it [here](#)) and look at our upcoming careers events [here](#).

We are really looking forward to seeing all of you again soon!

Yours faithfully,

Kelly Holbrook  
Headteacher