

31 December 2020

Return to School Updated Information

We would not normally be contacting you during the holidays, but I'm sure many of you will have heard the announcement made by the government (yesterday evening) that significantly changes the information shared with you previously about the return to school next week.

I know that you may have many questions, so I wanted to write to you as soon as possible, so that families can make any necessary preparations. I am once again sorry that the current situation, government U-Turns and indecision, has meant that schools are forced to communicate ever-changing information, which we know creates real difficulties for you all.

I will summarise what the Department for Education has announced:

- Schools will play a role in lateral flow testing to help reduce the spread of Covid-19, by finding cases of Coronavirus where there are no obvious symptoms. *This is clearly a huge undertaking for schools, given that we are already stretched in terms of capacity, given the context of the pandemic. The testing of potentially 2000 pupils and 200 staff clearly presents significant logistical issues and the government have given us very little guidance about how this can be made to work in terms of current staffing levels and available space, but we will provide any further information as soon as we have it.*
- **Week commencing 4 January**, school will be closed to all pupils except the children of critical workers (as defined by UK Government) and vulnerable children (including those who are Looked After and who have an EHCP).
- **From Monday 11 January**, Year 11 and 13 students will begin to return to school in line with testing arrangements.
- **All pupils will return to face-to-face teaching in school from 18 January** (unless they have Covid-19 symptoms or are self-isolating).

What this means for Year 13:

- Given the latest government announcements, pupils in Year 13 will now no longer be in school week commencing Monday 4 January 2021.

- They will access 'live' lessons on zoom, at the same time as their timetabled lessons. The delivery of these lessons will commence on Tuesday 5 January and continue for the rest of this week. An explanation as to how to access these lessons will be sent in due course. Teachers will deliver 'live' content at the beginning of a lesson and then be available to support, guide and answer pupil questions for the rest of the lesson time.
- If your child was due to take an external exam in January, **they will be contacted separately with further details.** We will be running face-to-face sessions in school to prepare students for these examinations where possible and these will start next week.
- Whilst we are working incredibly hard to ensure a return to full face-to-face teaching on Monday 11 January, we may need to stagger the return to school during this week. This depends on the exact plan in place for delivering the lateral flow Covid-19 tests for large numbers of pupils returning. We will let you know this information as soon as we have it. The exact date / time will be confirmed as soon as the government provides further details around their plans for testing and the school has been given the opportunity to plan accordingly.

Matthew Partington
Headteacher