



Friday, 18th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

January 2021

You will be aware from the news over the past few days there are proposals for schools in January 2021. These involve not all year groups returning in the first week and plans for the use of lateral flow tests in schools. Whilst this information was in the news, the official guidance from the Department for Education was received by schools on Thursday evening. We are also informed to expect further updates on this at some point over the Christmas break. The updates will hopefully help us understand better the government's intentions for weekly testing of staff along with regular testing of students who are contacts of those who test positive for COVID-19.

As I am sure you will understand receiving this news on the eve of the last day of term was far from ideal and we have had to consider quickly what we think will work best in our situation where we still do not have all the information we really need.

The government suggested we may add an extra INSET day on the first day of term (Monday, 4th January). I think this is very sensible in the circumstances. It will allow us to train our staff further for the undoubtedly complicated term ahead and enable plans to be made for testing. We will want to develop our ideas for how to teach children on site at the same time as doing our best to provide for those at home.

The plan for the first week is therefore as follows:

Monday, 4th January - INSET. **Only staff attend.**

Tuesday, 5th January to Friday, 8th January - Students in Years 11 and 13 must attend lessons on site. Planned assessments for Year 11 will go ahead, starting on the Tuesday. Students considered vulnerable should also attend and the children of critical workers may also attend. Please see below for further details of this. All other students should work from home following as close as possible their timetable for the week.

Monday, 11th January - all year groups in school as normal.

Clearly there is still much to work on in relation to next term and I apologise for the late notice of the additional INSET day. Once we have further guidance from government I hope to be able to share more information with you.

Vulnerable child and children whose parents are critical workers

Our provision for these children will be different to that provided last spring and summer. The government define children who are vulnerable to include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
- children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
- adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
- those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
- those living in temporary accommodation
- those who are young carers
- those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example, due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- other children and young people at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Parents/carers who are critical workers and/or whose children fit one or more of the categories above will, on Monday, 4th January, be asked to visit our website and enter their child's details to let us know that their child will be attending school from Tuesday, 5th to Friday, 8th January.

Positive COVID tests during the holidays

Should your child receive a positive test result please continue to go to our website and report the positive test to us using the button on the homepage. This is vital if we need to contact any students or staff who may be identified as close contacts and so that we are clear about who can return to school in January. The School is closed over the Christmas break but there will be a small team of us who will be monitoring the situation.

Thank you

We have been so pleased to receive the large number of supportive emails from you about our endeavours this term. Thank you for your support and patience. Learning to be part of the country's track and trace system has been challenging to say the least. With testing seemingly coming to schools it looks like we will gain new skills again next term! We will however remain focused on our core aim of providing the best education we can for all our students whilst playing our part in the national effort to keep each other as safe as possible.

There will not be a Parent Bulletin again this term, but I will update you during the course of the holidays if anything important changes.

I wish you an enjoyable and restful Christmas.

Yours sincerely

Dr M J Airey
Head Teacher