



18th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Urgent Information – Changes to the New Term

As you may have seen in the news, the Government yesterday announced changes to the start of the new term. All Secondary schools were notified yesterday to prepare for a phased return of students in January to allow the introduction of COVID-19 lateral flow tests for staff and students. To support this phased return, the government has confirmed that secondary schools can have an additional INSET day on Monday 4th January 2021. We now need your help with completing surveys outlined in this letter.

What does this mean for my child?

The first day of the new term in school will now be Tuesday 5th January 2021 for the following students:

- All Year 11 students
- Children of key workers (Years 7 to 10). If you are a key worker and would like your child to attend school from Tuesday 5th January you must complete the survey sent out by email.
- Vulnerable students (as identified and already contacted by school)

Government guidance is that the above students must attend school from Tuesday 5th January, unless they are self-isolating due to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive test within their household or due to other illness. Any other absence will be deemed unauthorised.

From Tuesday 5th January, all other students will be expected to follow their normal school timetabled lessons from home; working via google classroom for each lesson they would have attended school. These lessons will consist of either tasks set online, recorded lessons or live lessons.

All remaining students will return to school on Monday 11th January, unless they are self-isolating due to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive test within their household or due to other illness. Any other absence will be deemed unauthorised.

Please remember you should still follow Public Health England and NHS guidance if you or your child has symptoms or you receive a positive test result within your family.

Why is it necessary to introduce lateral flow testing into schools?

Public Health England is concerned that over the Christmas break, when more households will mix, the number of asymptomatic cases will increase. This means that, potentially, we could have more asymptomatic cases coming into school after the holiday and, therefore, an increased chance of an outbreak with increased rates of transmission in family homes and wider community. If we are serious about reducing the rate of infection within our community and the subsequent impact this could have on vulnerable individuals and our Health Service, then by identifying positive cases and limiting interaction, it will help to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Lateral Flow Tests - Mass testing of students and staff

From 5th January the school will begin mass lateral flow testing for all students and staff. Lateral flow devices (LFDs) are one of the new tools being used to help us detect and fight COVID-19. These tests can help identify people who have high levels of the virus who do not have symptoms and would not otherwise come forward for a test. The test is easy to administer, not invasive or painful, and will give a result within 10 to 30 minutes. The following hyperlinked article has a twitter video that explains what is involved with a lateral flow test.

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/08/lateral-flow-testing-new-rapid-tests-to-detect-covid-19/>

If the test is positive, the student or staff member must immediately self-isolate. Further guidance on this testing procedure will be communicated in January.

Government requests that as many students as possible should be tested upon their return to school. We strongly encourage all parents to support their child in being tested at the school. It is only by all students being tested that we can minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission for students, staff and their families.

Lateral Flow Tests - Serial testing of students and staff

Previously close contacts of positive test results had to self-isolate, resulting in significant disruption to education and families.

From January, any student or staff member who has been identified as being in close contact with someone that has tested positive will be able to remain in school if they agree to a lateral flow test once a day in the morning. This is known as serial testing.

By initially using mass testing for all students and staff then, when needed, using serial testing, we will be able to significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19. This makes for a safer school environment and enables us to ensure no further disruption to our students' education. This will also give our parents confidence that there is minimal risk of COVID-19 transmission from school to the family home.

It is essential that ALL parents complete consent at the survey sent out by email

When we have previously asked for all parents to provide a response to school over a COVID related issue, there have been too many parents who have failed to do so. Failure to respond creates significant additional workload for our staff at a time when we are already incredibly stretched. I cannot stress enough the importance of **all** parents taking responsibility to complete this survey by the stated deadline.

I appreciate this information comes to you at short notice and may cause some inconvenience; we are working with the same short deadlines and are doing everything we can to implement the guidance, so we ask for your understanding and kindness as we work to get everything in place.

The Government's decision for a phased return to school and the new testing arrangements are there to protect our families from the rising number of COVID-19 cases and we must do all we can to keep everyone safe.

Thank you for your support

Yours faithfully

Craig Jansen
Headteacher