

Dear Parents/Carers,

Returning to School in January 2021

I am sorry to be writing this letter to you on the final day of term, but wanted to make you aware of some changes to the beginning of the Spring Term in January 2021 that have recently been announced. You will be aware from the national news reports that there have been a number of announcements from the Department for Education over the last few days and you may be wondering what this means for you and your child in January.

The Government have advised all secondary schools to operate a staggered start to the new term to allow time to organise a testing programme. At the time of writing this to you, despite what has been reported in the media, no clarity has been given to schools around this and so I am forced to ask for your patience as we will have to communicate final plans to you over the holidays. While I realise that this is highly frustrating, for both yourselves and us in school, we will need time to plan an effective response.

What we do know so far:

- Year 11 will be the first year group to return to onsite teaching during the week beginning 4th January
- Students in Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 will likely be taught remotely for one week at the start of term
- We will be able to offer some provision for vulnerable and key worker children on site as we did during the first lockdown. Students will follow remote learning in school as if they were at home. This provision will not run as year group bubbles because of capacity and Government guidance states that “consistent bubbles” will be formed for the week.
- Around sixty-five students in Year 11 will also be sitting an external exam in the first two weeks of the new term. These will continue and students must attend as they count towards their final grades. Details of rooms and an exam timetable have been sent to those students involved this week

Testing

We have had some limited guidance from the Government about the testing process and we are expecting to get more information next week. As you can imagine organising testing in school for all staff and students is a complex and time-consuming process. At present we are not being offered any additional staffing or resources so we will have to plan this with school staff. Staff will need training and we will need to set up a safe space in which to administer the tests.

Testing is optional and we will be writing to staff and parents seeking consent before any student is offered a test.

It is our expectation at this point that we will be in a position to offer testing from the second week of term; however, in such a fast-moving situation we may have to adapt our plans at short-notice. We will keep you informed of our plans via our website, and our usual methods of communication. We will ensure that planning for testing on site is rigorous and will communicate this with you when we can. We very much appreciate the support and patience you have shown us.

Finally, I am truly sorry that I am unable to give finalised announcements about January’s return to school to you today and have tried to provide you with as much information as I can at the end of this term. We are working within tight constraints and often with little notice being given and this has left me frustrated on behalf of students, staff and yourselves as parents and carers. **Please continue to check the website during the second week of the holidays as we will ensure that contains all up-to-date information** and we will be in touch as soon as we can with clarity around returning to school.

I hope that you all have a very Merry Christmas and a lovely break with family and loved ones.

Yours sincerely

Richard Brand

Headteacher

