

22nd December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Plans for returning to school in January & Lateral Flow Testing

Firstly, let me apologise for writing to you during the holidays. I try to not make a habit of it, but as I said in my letter on Friday, I felt I needed time to consider fully our response to the recent Government announcements before writing to you to communicate our plans.

As you will have seen, the Government over recent days has announced:

- 1) Schools will conduct lateral flow testing for Covid-19 from January; these tests give 30-minute results, with the aim of allowing more students and staff to stay in school. Whilst this presents logistical challenges for all school leaders, I do believe it is a positive move in the long term.
- 2) That schools should stagger the return to enable time to set up this programme of testing. As a result, we have had to make several changes to the planned start to the Spring Term. While I understand these last-minute changes may cause issues for childcare and transport etc I wanted to try to communicate them now, so you can make arrangements. As such, please see below the timings for your child's return in January:
 - With many having formal exams in the first two weeks of term, **Year 11** will return as planned on **Monday 4th January**. We look forward to welcoming all students to be taught on site and know they will return ready to follow their normal timetable with the fantastic commitment and enthusiasm they have demonstrated since September.
 - Students in **Year 7 to 10** will begin remote lessons from **Tuesday 5th January**. Teachers will use Monday 4th January to plan and prepare for this period of remote teaching. Students should follow their normal timetable and will access teaching via Microsoft Teams. We will send a reminder with instructions and details nearer the time.
 - If your child does not have access to a device to access remote teaching please let us know, especially if you have siblings at school who will both require access at the same time. We have a small number of devices we are happy to loan to students. Please email info@thedeanacademy.org to arrange this; we will be in touch with you to arrange collection from school on Monday 4th January.



- At the time of writing, it is my understanding that students in Year 7 to 10 will return on site from Monday 11th January.
- We will also ensure provision on-site for any student who is from a keyworker family or who was in school during the first lockdown. This provision will run from Tuesday 5th January. We will be unable to run “bubbles” in individual year groups and Government guidelines allow for consistent bubbles to be formed, where students will stay within the same groups throughout the week. They will access all their remote lessons and not be able to mix at lunchtimes. If you think you will require access because you are a keyworker, please email info@thedeanacademy.org and we will be in touch towards the end of the holiday.

Lateral Flow Testing:

There are still many details yet to be confirmed around the Lateral Flow Testing programme in schools, and official guidance is expected tomorrow, but at this time two things are clear. The tests are voluntary and will require your consent. Below is a link which you can use to provide/deny consent. With a short turnaround to have this testing programme up and running I would appreciate if you could send this back as soon as you are able. Please also see attached a brief info-graphic provided from the NHS on how this Lateral Flow Tests will work. https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=bwmcfx50QkyVKi6ApblT_Q5Rctbf-D9NmRWwSfV3aPhUNFFUNK1ZWkpIWTdXTEp0Q1Y4NjNMSEpCNy4u

Secondly, there is a significant staffing demand to administer the tests. One way we, and other schools, will be looking to ensure staffing is to enlist the help of volunteers. Any parents who can commit to supporting with this testing programme, even if it is for half day a week or you have no medical background – it will help. We anticipate full training will be provided during the week beginning 4th January. Thank you in advance for your support with this as the pressure it adds to all staff across the school community is considerable.

We will, of course, keep you up to date as these plans come together. Please email info@thedeanacademy.org if you can offer your time in the New Year.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas, albeit a different one to those we are used to.

Yours sincerely



Richard Brand
Headteacher

