

Date 23 December 2020

Dear parent/carer

We are writing to you following the recent announcements regarding testing in schools with secondary age pupils from January.

The Government proposes a two-component approach

1. Case finding (mass testing)
 - all secondary school pupils in the week beginning 4th January
 - weekly testing for staff thereafter
2. Serial testing – testing for contacts of cases, daily for 7 days. This avoids the need for isolation and allows the pupils/staff member to attend school so long as they test negative.

We believe that serial testing has great potential benefit in reducing the disruption to pupils and teaching, which much of the school community has felt over the past few months. However, we recognise this is a huge logistical challenge, particularly at this time of year.

Due to the lack of detail regarding some aspects of these proposals (such as logistical support) and the very short timescales involved we have urged caution with our schools and suggested that they do not rush into drawing up plans for mass testing from 4th January. As you will appreciate, trying to implement something hastily without sufficient time to prepare, may ultimately do more harm than good. Our aim is to work with schools in order to deliver serial testing for pupils and staff in a well-planned and suitably resourced way so that we can minimise disruption to children and young people's learning in the new year.

We would like to confirm that students can return to school in the targeted year groups from January 4th if they are well enough to do so and not experiencing any COVID symptoms. It is not necessary for pupils to have a test in order to attend school in January. We are confident that the procedures that schools have already implemented are robust and should provide families with reassurance about their children's ongoing attendance at school. Schools will continue with these controls and existing contact tracing whilst we await further guidance and resources.

Representatives from East Sussex County Council's Public Health and Children's Services plan to meet with representatives from our schools on the 4th January to review any new guidance that is issued over the Christmas period. We will then be in a better position to guide and support schools with this considerable challenge in the New Year.

In the meantime, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and hope you enjoy the rest you all deserve.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Gallimore
Director of Children's Services



Darrell Gale FFPH
Director of Public Health