

18 December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

This is not quite the end of term Christmas message that I am accustomed to sending but then very little of this year has been “business as normal”. It is also longer than I would like and so I have attempted to separate it into sections for ease of reading.

I will start by echoing my end of term message to students. I am hugely grateful to our staff, the students themselves and to you as parents for the hard work and cohesive, supportive community that has enveloped the College this term. Staff have worked fantastically hard to ensure students have excellent teaching and learning. Lessons have been purposeful and work is completed to a high standard. Families and pastoral staff have ensured all are cared for and supported with any problems or concerns. Everyone’s role is valued. Thank you for all that you have done.

We start the Christmas holiday with an interesting conundrum to resolve. Some, but not all guidance regarding the start of Term 3 has been issued on the last day of term. Even with the best will in the world it simply will not be possible to plan in detail over the Christmas break.

With not all details currently available it is possible that the issue is open to misunderstanding, gossip and rumour which is not helpful to any of us. So, today we have discussed what we are able to advise at this point and what we might be able to ask of our community. This letter intends to set out our current thinking. It is of course subject to change at any point. If there is significant change we will inform you via the website and alert via Twitter.

**All information below is subject to further possible change**

### Start Dates for Term 3

**Monday 4 January:** is a pre-published INSET Day. Staff will be focusing on a pre-planned agenda of providing excellence for our potentially disadvantaged and vulnerable students. Senior Team and Support staff will be finalising the details of the provisional plans set out below

**Tuesday 5 January:** Year 11, 13 and students in other year groups identified as Key Workers or Vulnerable will be expected in College as normal. As advised, Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will be on a full remote learning programme where attendance is required in full and will be closely monitored.

**Monday 11 January:** Full College attendance for all in line with government guidance.



Distinguished School

It is essential, regardless of information below, that in this time students clearly understand their responsibility to follow all government guidance relating to prevent the spread of the virus. It is not acceptable in this time for households or groups of friends to be mixing outside of the advice in ways that enable the spread of infection. This would absolutely undermine all attempts made by the College to enable a safe and secure start to Term 3. We ask for your unequivocal support with this.

#### Asymptomatic testing in week beginning 4 - 8 January

The government have stated this testing is not mandatory for schools to provide but below is what we currently know about this possibility.

- If parental consent is provided, students on site can be given a lateral flow test to identify asymptomatic cases.
  - o If positive then they must immediately self-isolate until the result from a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is known.
  - o If negative they must follow good hygiene and observe social distancing as standard, they should be tested again 3 days later.
- At the time of writing we do not yet have detail on when the tests or the required PPE will arrive, how they need to be stored and whether any additional equipment will be required.

#### **The Heathfield Context**

The lateral test takes 30 minutes to administer. Current advice is it will require 9 staff to work through 100 students in 3 hours. We do not currently have 9 “surplus” staff available for this purpose. We would require volunteers and support to do this.

The advice for those not on site already (students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12) is that to enable this to happen they would arrive at school for a test at a scheduled time and then return home following their test. The transportation for this is complex to say the least and we currently have no guidance from ESCC regarding the availability of designated buses, public bus services almost certainly will not be able to reschedule their routes to facilitate this.

#### Daily Testing for close contacts

Below is what we currently know about this possibility.

DfE information released on 15 December stated: *“Students will be eligible for daily testing for seven days if they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive... From January, those in the same bubble do not need to self-isolate if they agree to be tested once a day.”*

The logistical complexities for the Heathfield context as set out above will also apply in this situation, including finding a location to conduct the testing safely on site whilst all students are in attendance.

#### **Therefore, our intention currently is as follows:**

We are fully committed to doing everything we can to ensure our students and staff are as safe as possible and continue to receive a high-quality education. We will endeavour to do as much as we are able with the support of a positive community.

1. Year 11 and 13 will attend as normal from Tuesday 5 January as will the students of Key Workers and those deemed vulnerable. We will attempt to run lateral flow tests for those with permissions on Tuesday 5 and Friday 8 January, providing we have the appropriate resources.
2. Remote Learning will be conducted for Years 7 to 10 and 12. This will be monitored closely for attendance and completion. Please expect to be contacted if your son/daughter does not engage as required.

3. College will be open on 11 January for all students who are well and do not show any symptoms of Covid-19 following the period 27 December to 11 January spent socially distanced and following guidance.
4. We will continue to work with parents closely to be aware of students with symptoms and positive Covid-19 test results. We will continue contact tracing and endeavor to make available the daily testing that will prevent the need for 10 days isolation for close contacts, providing we have the appropriate resources.

#### What do we need from you?

- Please ensure your son/daughter adheres closely to the advice on social distancing over the holidays. Please follow all guidance on being sensible over the Christmas period. Any household mixing that breaches this, risks affecting the College's ability to open fully in January.
- Please complete this consent form on the premise that we will be able to operate the testing as appropriate for your son or daughter:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffJV5ybYsfPv2u9Fx7VlyS1GLP\\_gXOc\\_JNO\\_SVCjBfxG7yNg/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffJV5ybYsfPv2u9Fx7VlyS1GLP_gXOc_JNO_SVCjBfxG7yNg/viewform?usp=sf_link)
- If you are willing and able to volunteer to help with any of the testing options above please complete the relevant sections within the consent form. We will pick these up on Monday 4 January and respond as necessary at this time. We may not be able to respond to all offers of help at that time. You may also receive short notice of support that is required in that week. Please be patient with us.

Please do not forward this form to anyone else. If you know of someone within the community who may be willing and able to help please ask them to contact us directly at [office@heathfieldcc.co.uk](mailto:office@heathfieldcc.co.uk). We will respond to any offers of help as soon as we are able.

All of the above intentions are completely dependent on us:

- Securing the tests in time and having facilities to store them.
- Securing consent for testing to take place.
- Having sufficient volunteers to administer the tests.

Please believe we will do all we can to enable the safe return of as many students as possible as soon as possible. If we are able to roll out asymptomatic testing to any more year groups we will endeavour to do so but, without the available information on transportation and logistical support, I cannot start from the premise that this will be possible.

Please know we hugely appreciate the support and good wishes from many parents. I am proud to work in such a constructive and positive community. I am absolutely sure that together we will find ways to overcome this current circumstance.

We will endeavor to communicate as clearly as we can but please do understand that given the timing this may not always be with the advance notice we would normally prefer.

Finally, please can I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and I hope that your break is both happy and healthy.

Yours sincerely



**MS C BARLOW**  
Headteacher