



26 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I am sure you are aware of a series of announcements that have been made this week regarding different aspects of education. There is still much detail yet to be released but I would like to try and offer as much clarity as I am able whilst also asking for patience on the things we do not yet know. I apologise for the length of this letter, I have tried to break it into sections. You are, of course, not obliged to read it all at once!

I will address the following:

- Testing of students prior to their return.
- The return to school site.
- The announcements on student outcomes (in place of examinations) 2021.

In each of these circumstances we have prioritised the student experience and welfare, at times above that of the adults involved. In some cases, we are still awaiting detailed information so I will outline what we do not know, as well as what we can confirm.

Testing of students prior to their return to College

The announcements from government and subsequent guidance detail the plans to ensure students have 3 tests at College before moving to home-testing with kits provided. The stated reason for testing on site is that students can be shown how to do the test whilst supervised before being able to self-test at home. The guidance states that ideally students should not return to lessons until they have a negative test result.

However, the logistics of this in a rural location are problematic to say the least. We have balanced the pros and cons of each method of achieving this outcome. None are problem-free and all depend on being able to staff the required capacity of testing.

At this stage I can share with you our provisional plans below but these are still under review and may change next week. In terms of parents being able to plan their availability, the days of return to lessons for the students should not change.

Date	Year group to be tested	Attending lessons on site
8 March	Year 10 and 11	Only keyworker/vulnerable students
9 March	Sixth Form and Year 7	Year 10 and Year 11
10 March	Year 8 and Year 9	Sixth Form and Year 7
11 March	-	Year 8 and Year 9



Distinguished School

Only children of key/critical workers and vulnerable children will attend lessons on site on Monday 8 March. Arrangements for these students to receive their initial test will be made separately. Children of key/critical workers and vulnerable children will re-join their year group bubble on the day the year group returns to face-to-face lessons.

For each day of testing we will need to work out the logistics required to test the students in a staggered manner whilst minimising the amount of social mixing. This may well require students to be dropped for a test and taken home again on the day.

Testing will take place with experienced volunteers who have been leading this process since January, it is conducted in discreet bays that are not overlooked. As much discretion and privacy as can be afforded, will be. You will be informed if the result is positive on the same day and given advice on what to do next. Negative results will be communicated via the NHS the following day. This is in the context that we know a negative result does not mean that a person is not carrying the virus, simply that the viral load is not strong enough to be identified that day.

Whilst we know this may be inconvenient for some parents for one day it avoids the circumstance of students, who may have successfully isolated themselves and their families since December, being identified as a close contact of a positive asymptomatic case simply from the first day back, or worse picking up the virus from an asymptomatic case we did not know about.

It is possible that in some cases we may be able to offer home testing from the 8 March. We do not have sufficient kits for this to apply to everyone and so this would need to be a limited offer, even if we are able to make it. Therefore, in order to plan we need **all parents/carers to complete the consent form below as soon as possible.**

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvNfxvAM5nZm4OKT_Q8gQZ55f3YtGQOCSG_ebhoCIlgRMuSRA/viewform?usp=sf_link

The form above is also your mechanism for indicating that you **do not** give consent for testing but we would urge you to consider the value of our community being able to identify asymptomatic cases and protect as many as possible. Regular testing as advised provides more opportunity for this to be picked up and therefore reduces the impact on others.

While testing is a good step forward, on returning to an environment where there will be close contact with others, we cannot guarantee that students will not pick up the virus, as is the case in normal society. We hope that our mitigations as outlined below, along with regular testing, will reduce the risk but we are mindful there may need to be future isolations.

Once they are back in normal lessons, 2 further tests will happen during the school day for each year group on a schedule allowing 3-5 days since the previous test. This will take place up to 19 March. From 22 March students will be provided with home testing kits which we will explain how to use and how to report results before they are issued.

When we know the detailed arrangements for your child from 8 - 10 March and associated travel/transport required, we will confirm them to you next week. The timing of this information relies on swift completion of the consent form from all parents.

The return to school site

Once students return to school following a negative test they will be in normal lessons with their teacher. The previous safety precautions will be in place including: one-way

systems, regular hand washing and sanitising, ventilation in all classrooms, bubbles for social spaces, dispersed access to canteen facilities in social spaces and the wearing of masks in communal areas. Assemblies will continue to be virtual.

This will be enhanced by students being asked to wear masks in classrooms. We are aware of those who are currently registered as exempt under the following relevant categories:

- People who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability.
- Where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress.
- To avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others – including if it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise or participate in a strenuous activity.

If you wish to update our records regarding your child on this matter, please contact your Pastoral Manager before the 8 March to let us know.

We are pleased to be able to offer our clubs and afterschool activities on the same basis that we did prior to Christmas. Details of what will run in Term 4 will be issued in due course before the clubs start again.

Transport will run in the same way as before Christmas and so students can expect the dedicated buses to be in service. As students are mixed on their bus route to and from school, this is an additional reason for us deciding to stagger the testing and return to school to reduce spread before asymptomatic cases have a chance of being picked up.

On return to College, the normal school expectations will apply so please can you check the following as a priority with your son/daughter:

- School uniform is clean and ready to return. This should include a coat.
- School shoes are polished and ready for school.
- Equipment has been checked and iPads charged.
- Lunch Money has been topped up on the school account.

Please can you also take this time to address any extremes of hairstyle that have been adopted during lockdown which would not be appropriate for school. Equally please ensure that additional non-uniform items like false nails, nail polish or multiple piercings are removed before the return to school. Whilst we understand experimentation and individual expression during a period of home learning, part of the value of returning to school on site is the re-establishment of community norms and collective values. Our school rules on this remain unchanged.

Exam Year group outcomes

A statement released by the Secretary of State for Education on Thursday said:

“Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil’s course, such as essays or in-class tests. No algorithm will be used. Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments. Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week of 9 August - moved forward from the week of the 23 August.”

The full text can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=2568affc-1ccd-40cf-af75-2e775650b1a2&utm_content=daily.

It is clear much will depend on the fine detail that will be issued later this term by the exam boards. Our initial judgement is that the systems suggested appear to make the best of a bad situation but there is still much to unpick and decide regarding:

- The optional use of exam board papers.
- The criteria for determining a grade which appears different to last year.
- The moderation process inside College and in the system as a whole.

Can I reiterate that it is inappropriate at this stage for students or parents to be seeking assurances from staff regarding the grades they might submit. This is because it might differ from the final grade which is submitted under the guidance provided and create false impressions. The main focus should be on returning to College and completing the current work to the best of their ability. Once we have more information from the exam boards we will share the evidence that will be used to determine the eventual grade, that cannot be decided now.

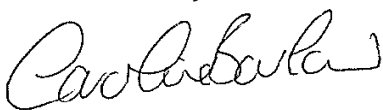
We also do not yet know what these announcements mean for considerations like leaving dates or end of year events. Until we get more detail we cannot plan for these.

As a College the most important things this term will be:

- Ensuring students are settled back into the routine of College and focused on working as well as they can, producing their best work incrementally as we move towards June. No one piece of work will be defining but the whole picture will allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in full if they apply themselves with effort and focus.
- Ensuring there is high quality careers guidance and information, supporting students to make sensible choices about their destinations. We will work alongside students and families throughout the period to ensure no student is left behind or without choices.
- Providing mental health and well-being support to ensure that students are supported to navigate their way through the next few months. They should know that we are with them, supporting them and giving them every opportunity to get any help they need, academic or pastoral.

I do appreciate there is a lot of information here. We have tried to be focused on what we have provided for you and will follow up next week with more as we can. We can't wait to see the students back but are equally here to receive and work with you regarding any concerns you may have. Hopefully by providing this information at an early stage we can at least allow for everyone, parents and staff, to plan accordingly and prepare students for the return to College.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher