

**26 February 2021**

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Covid-19 Update: Return to School on Monday 8 March 2021**

Following the government's announcement on Monday, regarding the return to school, I am writing to you with provisional details. However, I must stress that these may change and any final decisions are being taken, as usual, in a measured and phased way to ensure all children and staff are kept as safe as possible.

I am sure the news of a full return will be greatly welcomed by parents, carers, students, and staff alike and I would like to thank you for your support since January whilst students have been learning from home. We should all be reassured and encouraged that the scientific and medical experts have concluded that it is now safe for children to return to school. It is so important to get students back into school before the Easter holidays so that we can continue to build the momentum of the school year and return to some normality after such a long time away.

With numbers of infections falling and the vaccination programme making good progress (including reaching those most vulnerable to Covid-19), we can be hopeful that this stage of the pandemic is coming to an end. However, we must remain vigilant and continue to follow the guidelines that have become so routine across the Academy this academic year. Therefore, line ups, social distancing, year group bubbles and zones will remain in place, as will the staggered entry and exits to the Academy.

However, there has been a change to the face mask guidance. It is still a requirement to wear a mask in school communal areas as in the Autumn term e.g. corridors, entrance and exit of the Academy. Additionally, the government has now said that, **at least until the Easter holidays, face masks must also be worn in the classroom**. Please ensure that your child attends school with their plain mask as part of their daily equipment. Please also discuss with your child the importance of this so that learning time is not lost following this up with children and yourselves.

It is important, as ever, that we all remain vigilant to the symptoms of Covid-19 even though the risk to young people is very small. There are things we can all do to help reduce the risk of getting ill with Covid-19:

- Wash our hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Wash our hands as soon as we get home
- Cover our mouth and nose with a tissue or our sleeve (not our hands) when we cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash our hands afterwards.

**Principal: Mr Mark Avoth**

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The government has been clear that the return to face-to-face education is the national priority and rightly so owing to the significant and proven negative impact on the health and wellbeing of children & young people caused by not being in school.

The Roadmap clearly sets out that all students will begin to return to face-to-face education in the week beginning 8 March with the following testing measures in place:

- All secondary school and college students will take three COVID-19 tests as they return to the classroom from the 8 March at existing school testing facilities
- Schools and colleges will have discretion on how to test students over that week to enable their return to the classroom
- After the initial programme of three tests in school or college, students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home.
- Secondary school and college staff will also be provided with 2 tests to use each week at home.

As you are aware, we have been using the Lateral Flow Tests with our staff and with students who have accessed our onsite provision. However, the logistics of managing every child (approx. 1000 students) being tested on site are quite complicated especially in the first two weeks. That said, by participating in this, we will be able to identify any students who are positive but asymptomatic and who need to self-isolate. In order to ensure every child's first test can be managed, whilst still maintaining a safe environment, we are proposing that students will be required to attend school at the following times for testing only:

#### **Monday 8 March**

- Year 10 (AM session) and Year 11 (PM session) will receive a specific time and entrance to arrive at the Academy. They will be tested and asked to go home immediately. The result of the test will be notified to them when they are home. They are not required to wear school uniform.

#### **Tuesday 9 March**

- Sixth Form (AM session) and Year 9 (PM session) will receive a specific time and entrance to arrive at the Academy. They will be tested and asked to go home immediately. The result of the test will be notified to them when they are home. They are not required to wear school uniform.

#### **Wednesday 10 March**

- Year 8 (AM session) and Year 7 (PM session) will receive a specific time and entrance to arrive at the Academy. They will be tested and asked to go home immediately. The result of the test will be notified to them when they are home. They are not required to wear school uniform.

#### **Thursday 11 March**

- All students will return to full time face-to-face teaching following an extended tutorial providing they have tested negative. Students will be expected to wear full Academy

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uniform and ensure their hair is a natural colour, make-up and jewellery as per Academy rules and bring their planner and equipment.

**Please note that our 'in school provision' for vulnerable students and children of critical workers will continue until Thursday 11 March when everyone will return as normal.**

I hope parents/carers appreciate that the reason we have decided to carry out the first test in this way is to ensure no students have to self-isolate on Day 1 because they have come into contact with a student who receives a positive test. The guidance confirms that schools must send home anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, "advising them to self-isolate immediately and for the next 10 full days counting from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive".

The guidance also states that returning secondary students will be tested three times on site at least three days apart. Following your child's third test, they will be provided with home kits for twice weekly testing. More details on the testing programme can be [found here](#).

If you have not yet completed your child's Lateral Flow Test consent form then please do so [here](#).

(Non-consent does not mean you cannot come in for teaching – all students are welcome back). Testing is voluntary; however, we would encourage everyone to participate in the asymptomatic testing programme to help break transmission links by identifying those who may be carrying the virus unknowingly.

Owing to the fact that all our support staff will be involved in the mass testing process, I have asked staff to ensure they are onsite from Monday 8 March. This is to allow them to prepare for a full return to face-to-face teaching timetable, including preparing resources. Therefore, the last 'live' lesson to ANY year group will be on Friday 5 March. All students will still be able to access online learning on Show my Homework for Monday 8 March to Wednesday 10 March.

Critically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) students and staff still need to remain at home until Wednesday 31 March at the earliest. According to the DfE, although children are "gradually being removed" from the shielding patients list, those who **are confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable should** "shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice". Once we have received confirmation that a child is CEV, online work will be provided. The guidance states that Clinically Vulnerable staff and students "can continue to attend school".

I must remind you that if your child shows any symptoms of Covid-19 (a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature and/or a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste and smell) **please do not send them to school** nor send them for their asymptomatic testing but go to the dedicated NHS 111 Covid site, <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> for details of what you need to do.

Our remote learning programme will continue as communicated previously, until Friday 5 March. Each day is vital in your child's education, so it is very important that all students continue to work hard from home and keep up with their lessons and learning.

Year 11 and Year 13 online assessments will continue so please ensure your child prepares fully for these. This is particularly important following the recent announcement about GCSE and Post-16 grading.

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As we have some time to plan for your children's return, please can you play your part and ensure that they are fully equipped and abide by our uniform and appearance expectations. Further information on all matters will be sent out early next week.

We look forward to welcoming students back to school and thank you again for everything you have been doing to encourage and support their learning from home.

Kind regards

**Mr M Avoth**  
**Principal**

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