

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

24th February 2021

Apologies – this update is lengthy and detailed but necessary. Please take time to read and re-read. I have also created an audio version of the key information which can be found here: <https://youtu.be/cVjG-SWhWXk>

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope all of our families are well and managed to make the most of some family time during last week's break. Another strange time as very limited ability to get out and about considering the weather but hoping that the breaks from online learning at least led to some opportunities away from our screens.

I am sure many of you tuned in Monday night to the Government updates to see the projected route out of the current situation. These updates also included the important information on how we anticipate welcoming those students who have not been able to be on site since December back into the Academy. The information below is what we believe is the current intention based on the Prime Minister's announcements to Parliament and the nation yesterday along with subsequent updates that are released off the back of these updates. It is likely there will still be further clarification and additional information to be received and digested over the coming days and we will, of course, provide further updates as we move towards the 8th March. Therefore this information is how we believe it stands as of today, Wednesday 24th February 2021.

Monday 8th March 2021 – The Government have confirmed that **all schools** can re-open to **all students** from Monday 8th March. Accepting that the language used often feels uncompassionate, the Government have reiterated that attendance to school will become mandatory and a legal requirement again for all students who do not have a personal and active shielding letter from Monday 8th March. We therefore are expecting all of our students, who are not active shielding, to return to site from this week in line with the published return plan which we aim to release over the coming days. Of course we will continue to support and work with any families who are particularly anxious about returning to site from the 8th March in order to support all students being back in the Academy as soon as they can.

The pre-requisite to the full opening on 8th March is the administration of lateral flow screening tests (further information below). We are therefore working through the logistics of a staggered testing and return programme and **will publish full details of which year groups will return on which days that week as soon as possible**. During this week (wb 8th March) there will be some disruption to our offer as we will have to prioritise getting staff back on site, testing students returning and supervising year groups as they return to site. It is therefore likely, that week, that live lessons will not be running. Our aim is that by Friday 12th March **all** students will be back on the Academy site full time and from then onwards. With the exception of face coverings (further information below) little else about the operation of the site is changing from the September return. At least for the immediate short term we will have to retain systems of controls introduced in September; enhanced hand hygiene, segregation of year groups, separated social spaces, staggered dismissal times, one way systems and keep left systems. Although there have been some updates to the video across Terms 1 & 2 most of the basic information hasn't changed so anyone who wants a refresher, or any students who are feeling particularly anxious about this return, may find some use in re-watching the September re-opening video I made. I haven't updated this given so much of it is unchanged but it will give a flavour. <https://youtu.be/zJELvmgQRtc>

We also communicated before Christmas that we would be moving back to full uniform and the use of changing rooms, in line with public health guidance. We have reviewed this following the most recent lockdown and rise in cases and although case numbers are now back to the level they were in October time we have decided to pause the reintroduction of this until after Easter. This will give another 6 weeks for case rates to continue to decline, vaccine rollout to continue and for

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students to settle back into school routine. Therefore students should continue to attend in full school uniform on days where they **do not** have PE and attend school in full Bristol Met PE Kit on days they **have PE**.

Lateral Flow Testing – Another announcement from Monday was around the expectation that all students who consent will be tested for corona virus using a lateral flow device before starting back after Monday 8th March. We were gearing up for this in January as a similar plan was announced at Christmas by the Government. We therefore spent time over the Christmas break setting up a testing site within the Academy and it has been in use for staff and those students on site over the last few months. The Government's wish is now, in summary:

- i) Students tested **once before** they actually start back on site. We are therefore planning a logistics puzzle of testing a year group on one day and then they will start back the following day. Students will therefore have to attend site to take their test and then go home again, starting back the following day (assuming they don't test positive)
- ii) Once back in and running they will then be tested a further 2 times across the next two weeks at between 3 and 5 days intervals. This will be done during the school day by taking groups at a time. Obviously only those students who we have consent for will be tested.
- iii) Once these 3 tests are done students will move to a system of home testing. The Government are providing home test kits and instructions to do this. Again, this is voluntary but the Government are appealing for as many families to consent to this to continue to keep transmission chains low, given the number of asymptomatic cases identified in younger people, to ensure that, combined with the vaccine programme, we maintain progress towards the full exit roadmap published on Monday. The logistics of distribution of the home test kits is still to be determined and we will communicate further detail over the coming weeks.

All of the testing is reliant on consent for testing being received (or rejected). Previously we have circulated a sign up link and asked for families to either consent or reject. The majority of replies are consent but we still have a significant number of families who have not indicated one way or another which makes planning the incredibly complicated logistics for us difficult. We will therefore be targeting communication to families who we believe have not yet indicated either consent or rejection and asking for your support. Thank you in advance for completing this to enable us to direct our energies in the best way possible. Any family who do not wish to consent to testing are entitled to reject consent and their children will not be tested on site. These students will still be able, and expected, to return to site on the same day and time as the rest of their year group as the aim of the testing programme is to break transmission chains in asymptomatic cases. Of course any student, regardless of consenting or not to LFD testing, must still isolate and arrange a PCR test should they display any of the recognised 3 symptoms of corona virus (fever, new cough, anosmia).

Face Coverings in Secondary Schools – this is likely to be the area of most unease from the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday evening. The intention is to now ask all staff and students to wear face coverings at *all times* when inside secondary schools. This would also include in classrooms when social distancing (>2m) is not possible. In every school it is impossible to maintain 2m distance from all other people; they simply are not built to be big enough for that and unlike shops etc we cannot queue young people outside and operate a 1 in 1 out system. It is therefore inevitable that this new request means that students will be asked to wear face coverings in lessons. I know this announcement will cause mixed emotions. I know that because of previous communications between many of our families. Some of our families will think this is an overdue decision. Some of our families will think this is a step too far. I appreciate the mixed emotions. I hope our families understand that this is not a decision made by me or a decision local to Bristol Met. This is a decision made by the Government and their advisors who have been clear that this is a *temporary* measure and one which they hope will be short lived (being reviewed after 3 weeks). Although not consulted about this decision we have to implement it and I thank you in advance for this understanding and for your continued support. Of course, as has always been the case, if a student

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is medically exempt from wearing a face covering then they do not need to wear one. I would merely ask that families consider supporting this desire as much as possible in order that we can, one hopes, move towards the end of this pandemic as rapidly as possible and not be back in a position of partial or full closures ever again.

INSET Day Wednesday 17th March – we had an INSET day for staff training scheduled for Wednesday 17th March. Given we will only just have returned all students to site we have taken the decision to postpone this to later in the year. We are aiming now for that day to be on Friday 28th May so the Academy will be closed to all students on that day. I wanted to give as much notice of that new closure data as possible.

I hope some of the above is useful information for our families and we will provide further updates over the coming week.

In areas not related to the wider opening plan:

Online Parents Evening for Year 10 families – this is scheduled for Thursday this week, 2pm to 6pm. Please ensure you have logged in and booked your appointments. If you don't know how to book please ring Reception between 8am and 4pm on 0117 3772071 and someone will assist. We have used the online video system now for a few evenings and early feedback from families and staff is it is an incredibly simple and welcome system to use.

Year 11 Assessments (replacing the scheduled Mocks) – these are happening this week and next and seem to have started well so far. It is another testament to how resilient our students and families are. If your child is in Year 11 please check in with them and see how they are doing and if they have everything they need. Further info can be found in the Year 11 specific letter sent the end of last term by Miss Barnes, it can be found here <https://bristolmetropolitanacademy.clf.uk/letters/year-11-update-letter/>

WhatsUp with Everyone – Aardman Animations (Bristol based creators of Wallace & Gromit amongst other things) have teamed up with several Universities to produce a series of young people friendly resources covering various aspects of life pressures and mental health. They can be found at this website <https://www.whatsupwitheveryone.com/> Thank you to one of our families for sharing this resource.

Omegle – Concerns over online social platform. Omegle has been featured in the news recently and we have seen our monitoring software picking up students actively searching or using this online service. It is a service that allows people to be matched up with complete strangers for online chat or video exchange. This clearly poses a concern around who may use it and for what purposes. There are lots of online help guides around Omegle which can be found via a simple search. As always, this highlights the importance of us, as adults, keeping an oversight on what our young people are accessing online but, more importantly, regularly engaging with young people on how they safely use online systems.

Digitech Studio School Bristol – part of the statutory (and moral) requirements of schools is that we publicise local providers who offer alternative provisions to those offered by Bristol Met. Digitech Studio School is a 14-19 provider that offers provision for Year 10 onwards. It is also part of the Cabot Learning Federation. If your child is currently in Year 9 or Year 11 and is interested in finding out more about what DSSB offers please have a look at their flyers and website <https://digitechstudioschool.co.uk/>
<https://bristolmetropolitanacademy.clf.uk/wp-content/uploads/Digitech-Flyer-Post-16.pdf>
<https://bristolmetropolitanacademy.clf.uk/wp-content/uploads/Digitech-Flyer-Year-10.pdf>

I cannot overstate how excited we are to be welcoming all students back to site from the week beginning 8th March. Please look out for further detailed communications around the exact dates and times for different year groups as we implement



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the requested testing programme and get each year group back in and running. We hope, like everyone, that this is the final disruption to schooling!

Finally, as always, thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to navigate these very different times.

Best wishes,

Mr C Shaw

Principal



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