

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

5th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I promised I would write at the end of the week with any further updates regarding the plans for wider opening next week.

We are now approaching the end of the first round of testing prior to full return. On Thursday we had nearly 500 students consent to test and come through the site. This was around 85% of those invited. We expect similar numbers today. Thank you for supporting this initiative and thank you to the students for the mature approach. A particular thank you to those amongst you who have volunteered time to help staff the testing facility, without which this logistical challenge would have been impossible.

On Monday & Tuesday we will undertake the second round before welcoming everyone back to site.

A few questions that have come up since I last wrote:

- 1) Notification of LFD Test Results – you should, by now, have had a result if your child has had a test on Thursday. In general the NHS system in use sends an automated notification within a few minutes of us bulk uploading the registration files that we create when your child comes to be tested. We are trying to do this twice a day; once at the end of the morning session (around midday) and again at the end of the afternoon session (around 4pm). Regardless of the online systems we would **absolutely** ensure that any positive or voided test was communicated personally to a parent/carers, ideally by telephone as soon as we became aware (generally within 45 mins of the student taking the test). Therefore if you do not hear from us you can assume any test is negative. Unfortunately once the result is uploaded to the NHS website we have no access or control over it so we cannot explore why an automated notification has not come to you but we can promise that any positive or voided results would be followed up by us in person so please do not be concerned.
- 2) Home Testing – we will distribute home testing kits to all students in week beginning 15th March and I will write again next week with details of how we will do this. This is the first date we are allowed to do so according to Government guidance, following the series of 3 on site tests which will be concluded by Friday 12th March. Each kit will contain enough tests (along with all materials, instructions etc) to administer 2 tests a week for 3 weeks (plus a spare). This will take students through to the Easter break. I would imagine (though we haven't yet had confirmation) that we will then provide an additional kit which will take across Easter and then subsequent kits on return after Easter. As this situation continues to rapidly evolve we await further information. You will have also seen in the news that the Government have now promised access to home testing for **anyone** who wants it and has school age children ([Article here](#)). As it stands, these kits are **not** distributed by schools (and the Government have told us we cannot distribute kits to families) and instead will be either ordered directly by families or collected from specific distribution points (detail still emerging, but [info so far available here](#)). We, as an Academy, are only providing kits for our students (as that is all that is provided to us)! Instructions on how to carry out home testing will be included in the pack but they are also [available here](#), in a number of languages, along with a video. The purpose as well of having the 3 on site tests is to ensure students are well versed in the process before moving to home tests.
- 3) Serial Testing – going back to pre-Christmas communications; the DfE announced that LFD would be used as an alternative to isolation for those identified as close contacts. By January this plan had been parked following additional input from public health. It has **not** been resurrected. I can therefore confirm that anyone identified as a close contact of a positive corona virus case will **still** be required to isolate for 10 days (the current isolation period) from the date of the last close contact. Of course we hope that with current transmission rates and the

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continued rollout and perceived efficacy of the vaccine programme, coupled with the continuation of the system of controls, that we see few, if any, positive cases and therefore we hope to have few groups needing to isolate.

On Wednesday 10th March at 8:30am we will welcome all students back to the Academy site. The doors will open at 8:10am as they have since September. Students will enter through the main atrium entrance. Hand sanitiser will be available as it has been since September. Students will then go directly to their tutor room to prevent mixing of year group bubbles as they have done since September.

I wanted to outline the fact that almost none of the routine has changed since September. I wanted to do that as I appreciate that returning in September was both exciting and anxious for most of us as it was the longest we had been away from the Academy and there was lots of change due to covid. Although it has been another strange time and another period away, because of the control measures we already had in place there is very little change this time around so we hope that the return is mainly just exciting and less anxious for our community.

Face coverings is one area still raising questions and I fully understand why. I really hope that families understand that, regardless of your own views on them, we have little choice as a state school but to implement the guidance as directed. The guidance is that every student who is willing and able should wear a face covering indoors at all times where social distancing is not possible. This is to be reviewed at Easter. Of course, those who are unable or unwilling will not have to follow this guidance. I thank you in advance for your support and understanding.

Some parents have asked about PE lessons. The Government guidance and Public Health Guidance is clear that face coverings are not expected to be worn where students are engaged in physical exertion. They also do not need to be worn outside. When weather is nice the PE team will endeavor to use outside space as much as possible as this is better for everyone anyway especially given many of us have spent too much time indoors in the last 12 months. Where this isn't possible then additional control measures will continue to be used (enhanced hygiene etc). Social distancing will not always be possible in indoor PE lessons but given the dynamic nature of physical activity actual close and prolonged contact opportunities will be fewer in occurrence. In addition, if any student wants to continue to wear a face covering whilst participating in PE lessons indoors, and their staff member deems it safe to do so, they will be able to continue to do so if that makes them more comfortable.

The Government have updated their guidance to parents/carers which [can be found here](#). I don't think there is much in it that I haven't previously communicated but it is there for reference should you wish to take some time to read it yourself.

We are very much looking forward to getting back up and running properly next Wednesday and seeing everyone together again. Until then, enjoy the upcoming weekend and I hope we are entering the final phase of this situation as the vaccine rollout continues.

Best wishes,



Mr C Shaw
Principal