



HIGH STANDARDS. HIGH ASPIRATIONS. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

18th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I had this letter ready to send to you a few days ago and was hoping to bring a largely positive end to a difficult year for our community (as it has been for the world). Unfortunately there were some late announcements from Government (some of which are welcome news but just a bit late in the planning stage) which mean this letter starts with some much more operational information than I was hoping for so please bear with me:

Isolation Period – as you will have likely seen by now, the Government cut the isolation/quarantine period from 14 days to 10 days at the end of last week. This now means that anyone who tests positive for corona virus, has symptoms of but isn't tested for corona virus or is identified as a close contact of someone who tests positive for corona virus but chooses to not engage in proactive testing (see next section) will now isolate for 10 days rather than 14. The NHS section is always kept up to date so if you need further information you can check that website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

Holiday Covid Cases – we appreciate that the last few months have been difficult with regards students being told to self-isolate if they have had close contact with others in school who have tested positive. I firstly wanted to thank all students and families for the support they have shown where we have had to contact families to tell them this news. We all hope that there are no cases that cause this to happen over Christmas but we are being asked by the Government to continue to play our part in the national 'Test and Trace' system for the period between school finishing on the afternoon of Thursday 17th December through to the end of Wednesday 23rd December. That means that if any student at Bristol Metropolitan Academy tests positive **and had symptoms before Sunday 20th December** then you should contact us using the information below to allow us to identify close contacts. If your child becomes unwell *after* Sunday 20th December there is no need to contact us as no other students from within the Academy will be close contacts due to the identification period only being 48 hours before symptoms present. You should however engage with the NHS Test and Trace identification team including details of any academy students your child may have had social contact with after school breaks up on Thursday afternoon.

Please forward your email to Positive.Results@clf.uk with the following information:

- Your Name
- Your child's name
- **The Academy they attend.**
- Date of first symptoms
- The date of the test
- The date of the positive result.

WB Monday 4th January 2021 – Monday 4th January is an INSET Day for staff. **You may have seen yesterday's announcement** (apologies, but it came to school leaders at the same time as it came to the media) that from Tuesday 5th January all secondary schools will operate a phased return for students to enable the rollout of rapid covid testing (see next section). In a way, this very late announcement has taken some of the niceness out of this letter as, unfortunately, it has raised questions which we do not yet have answers to. I will write to parents again as soon as we have some concrete answers.

What we do know from today's announcement is:

- a) Staff return on Monday 4th January – all students remain at home (as was planned). All staff will be rapid tested for covid to ensure no staff are carrying the virus before students return.
- b) Tuesday 5th January – Year 11 return due to them being in their final exam season. Currently it looks like all Y11 will be offered a rapid covid test (result within 30mins on site) on both Tuesday and Friday that week to ensure that no Y11 are



HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

carrying the virus. Participation will be optional but the Government hope that if the majority consent it will rapidly break the transmission chain and ensure that schools see fewer cases in January and less need for isolation of bubbles.

- c) Tuesday 5th to Friday 8th January – **Years 7 to 10 will be studying from home.** Online learning, blended learning and live lessons will all be delivered. By the majority of students remaining at home for these additional 4 days (plus the weekend) it is hoped that any spike in positive cases due to social interactions across Christmas give rise to far fewer interactions and therefore positive cases. These additional days with only Year 11 on site will also allow schools to plan the implementation of proactive testing (see next section) in line with the Government's wish for the next phase of testing and isolating covid cases reducing the need for larger bubbles of isolation and the need for future lockdowns or higher tiers. The Government have said that schools may be able to welcome small numbers of our most vulnerable children as well as some children of critical workers (note they have resorted to the previous definition of critical workers rather than the wider key worker definition used during the initial lockdown). Again, we await further information on this as well as trying to work out the logistics so I would ask for support from our communities now to try to plan for any student who is able to safely remain at home for those 4 days in January to plan to do so. Once we have further information about capacity to have any student not in Year 11 on site in that first week we will communicate further.
- d) On Monday 11th January **all students return to the Academy for their normal timetable on site and in person.** We do not yet know if there are plans to offer rapid testing to all students across all year groups but will update if that is what we are told is intended.

Whilst I am sure we all welcome any move that sees less restrictions in the long run I full appreciate this will be an additional 4 days of inconvenience for our students and families in the short term. I am sorry that I cannot fully articulate our plans in this letter but hope you will understand that we are working diligently behind the scenes with the information we have so far been given, along with every other school in England, to try and plan for this large undertaking.

Proactive Testing – the Government announced on Tuesday this week that following some initial pilots across the country they will roll out proactive testing in secondary schools from the start of January.

This now means that, much like for medical workers, education staff will now be tested at least weekly to ensure we have no asymptomatic staff in the Academy.

It also means that *any* student identified as a 'close contact' of a positive corona virus case will be able to take a lateral flow test (a much simpler mouth swab version of the currently used covid test) each morning for 7 consecutive school days. This will give a result within a few minutes.

If the student tests negative they will be able to attend school that day.

If they test positive they will of course have to go home and then enter a 10 day isolation period. Any positive result will have to have a follow up test using the current laboratory based system which is more accurate than the lateral flow tests. However, by offering a lateral flow test each day for 7 consecutive school days the Government feel this offers a high level of cumulative accuracy and enables far lower levels of disruption to children's education than children potentially having to isolate for 10 days at a time. It is worth pointing out that engagement in this testing will, of course, be optional. However, any student or family that does not wish to consent to testing daily for 7 school days will instead have to remain at home for the full 10 days of quarantine as per the current process.

There is of course much more information needing to be provided about this rollout which we will share as soon as we have it ourselves which includes when exactly we will have the facilities to engage this system. In the meantime, the initial briefing and Q&A is available here: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/15/mass-testing-in-schools-your-questions-answered/>

PE and Uniform – from the return in January we will be back to **all** students arriving in full school uniform every day as we are able to return to using changing rooms within year group bubbles. Initially we are still not able to use lockers so students will need to have a suitable school bag or separate PE bag to carry their PE kit. We were actually given permission to return to changing rooms last term (following initial studies of transmission in schools, gyms and leisure centres with no detectable patterns attributed to the use of changing facilities) but we decided to wait a little longer whilst considering our options. Given that it seems highly likely that the current situation will continue to exist in some form for the remainder of the academic year we feel we need to make this decision to enable wider access to activities in PE. Although this will require some greater planning for students it will improve





HIGH STANDARDS. HIGH ASPIRATIONS. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

overall experience as currently PE have been limited in activities as we have not wanted students to be cold, wet and muddy in clothes they then have to wear for the rest of the day. We understand that this would not necessarily be the preference for all students or families but appreciate your support in making this move back to the "usual" way of working.

Now that I have covered the current operational information for the January return I wanted to finish on a couple of nicer areas to head into the festive break:

'Christmas Jumper' Day and Competition – on Friday 11th December a number of our students and staff sported their best Christmas/Festive jumpers in aid of 'Save the Children'. We raised just over £300 for charity. We saw some amazing efforts; Poppy was crowned winner for the additional accessorising of their Christmas jumper and JJ coming in as runner up. We managed to feature as 'Day 11' on the BBC Points West Advent Calendar. Well done to Poppy, JJ and everyone that took part and supported.

We also ran a staff competition (which became a bit bigger than we expected) for the best decorated work space. 'Team Admin' really went to town pulling a few late evening shifts to get their office area decorated and taking the coveted Trophy (a recycled old PE trophy). It was quite fitting given they beat 'Team PE' into the 2nd place!



East Bristol Food Bank Collection – over the last week we ran a House Competition for donating items to our local food bank who support our community throughout the year but particularly over the winter months. We collected a mini bus full of items which are being delivered today. The winning House was the 'Performance Panthers' so congratulations to any of our Performance students, additional house points will be awarded for the Term 3 House Cup.

Festive Video – students and staff have been spending some time at break, lunch and after school spreading some festive cheer. You can see our rendition of "I wish it could be Christmas everyday" on <https://youtu.be/crVZINK63l8> and we hope it brings a bit of joy at the end of this difficult year. All filming took place within year group bubbles or socially distanced spacing for staff with some very good camera work and editing by our amazing Mrs and Mr Vince team.

I sincerely hope that this festive period is a time of wellness and relaxation for all of our students, staff, families and wider community. Regardless of faith it would normally be a time for our community members to spend some much needed time relaxing and enjoying the company of their families. We know that this year is, as we have become somewhat accustomed to, going to be a bit different but I hope that it still provides much needed recharge time. I also hope that 2021 is the year where we can all start to move forward and re-build after this year.

Best wishes, Merry Christmas, Seasons Greetings and a Happy New Year to you all.

Mr C Shaw
Principal