

Thursday 1 April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope and trust that you are well and are keeping safe.

I am writing today to wish you a warm, happy, and peaceful Easter, but also to update you on a range of matters. I will hopefully provide some clarity, but should I fail to do so, and should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. As you are aware, we are in 'Step 1' of HM Government's roadmap out of [lockdown](#), and we will ensure that you are kept up to date as we move forward with any changes to the restrictions as they apply to schools. You can view the 'coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance' that schools must follow [here](#), and the associated guidance for parents and carers [here](#); both are updated regularly.

I provide for your convenience, within the body of this letter, links ([in blue](#)) to sources of information, guidance, regulations, and advice, should you wish to consult them for more detail. Given the necessary length of this communication, I summarise below the contents for each section so that you can navigate directly for the information you require. If you are reading this electronically, clicking or tapping on the respective section will take you directly to it.

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## **Asymptomatic coronavirus testing at home**

As part of the [asymptomatic coronavirus testing](#) programme, students and staff are now taking twice-weekly tests for COVID-19 at home (see our [letter](#) of 16 March for more detail and advice). Members of a household of a student or staff are also advised to take these twice-weekly tests at home, as outlined (with details of how households can order tests) [here](#). Staff and students are also expected to continue testing throughout the Easter holidays at home every 3-4 days — to manage the spread of coronavirus. All staff and students have been provided with home test kits for the period and are advised to test before returning to school or college for the summer term on Monday 19 April, either the night before, or morning of, the first day back, in order that we may find and isolate any positive cases.

Results — whether void, positive or negative — must be reported to NHS Test and Trace, either [online](#) or by telephone (as provided in the home test kit instructions) as soon as the test is completed. Results should also be reported to the school via [this form](#) to support our contact tracing duties, which continue over the Easter holidays.

- Students aged 11 should be tested by an adult. Students aged 12 to 17 should self-test and report with adult supervision. (The adult may conduct the test if necessary.) Students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed.
- If the LFD test provides a negative result, no further action is required.
- If the LFD test provides a positive result:
  - ⇒ The student must isolate immediately, in line with current [guidance](#), along with household members.
  - ⇒ Contacts will be identified by the school and/or NHS Test and Trace and will be advised to isolate.
  - ⇒ A lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test must be arranged (either [online](#) or by calling 119) and taken within 2 days to confirm the result.
    - ⇒ If the PCR test is positive, the student and contacts must continue to isolate for the required period.
    - ⇒ If the PCR test is negative, it overrides the LFD test, and the student and contacts can end their isolation.

### **Contact Tracing over Easter**

To support the NHS Test and Trace process, we are required to continue with contact tracing for the first 6 days of the Easter holiday, i.e., up to and including Wednesday 7 April.

- If a student tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) over Easter, parents and carers should notify the College using the [COVID@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk](mailto:COVID@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk) email address only, which will be checked daily. (Please note that notification by any other means may not be picked up.)
- Parents and carers should complete [this brief survey](#) to provide the detail necessary for us to identify contacts and advise isolation.
- Staff, students, parents and carers are required to inform the school of a positive case if either symptoms or a positive home LFD test occurred within 48 hours of being in school, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. Whilst, to emphasise, we will only assist NHS Test and Trace and PHE with the identification of close contacts and issuance of self-isolation advice within these parameters, given that we keep meticulous records to assist PHE trace transmission within the community, I would be grateful if parents and carers would inform us if students test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) irrespective of the date.

- If staff, students, parents and carers test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms (or otherwise taken a test) more than 48 hours since last being in school, the contact tracing instructions that will be provided by NHS Test and Trace should be followed.

I repeat below, for your convenience, the updated definitions of 'contact' that we must adhere to ([full source detail can be accessed here](#)):

- In short, a 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic (or date of test if the person was asymptomatic) up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (or date of test) — i.e., when they are infectious to others.
- Being in 'contact' with a person who has tested positive means:
  - ⇒ Face-to-face contact within 1m.
  - ⇒ Contact within 1m without face-to-face contact for 1 minute or longer.
  - ⇒ Contact within 2m for longer than 15 minutes (either as a 'one off' or in total over the course of a day).
  - ⇒ Travel with the person who has tested positive in the same vehicle.

### **Free School Meals provision and other financial support over Easter**

Families and children who require additional support over Easter with food and other essentials will be provided with such via HM Government's [COVID-19 Winter Plan](#), which has been extended to 16 April. The Free School Meals voucher scheme that was provided by Devon County Council (DCC) over Christmas and the February half term through [HM Government's £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#), will be used again 'to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it' over the Easter period. (Please see this [guidance letter from DCC for families](#).) Eligible parents and carers will have received a separate communication, providing them with their unique voucher code for each child, outlining the detail about how to redeem such, and providing information about how to access help if required.

In short, each code can be used once on the [Hawk Select](#) website to redeem vouchers to the value of £15 per child per week for a range of supermarkets. Parents and carers can save the vouchers to their phone or tablet to use online (depending on the supermarket) or show at the checkout in store. Alternatively, parents and carers can print the vouchers off to give to the cashier. (Please note also that if you are a parent or carer who received a voucher code for the February holidays but have yet to use it, you must do so by Sunday 25 April 2021 before it expires.)

Most families will be familiar with redeeming these voucher codes, but may I please urge any parent or carer that has any issue accessing the [Hawk Select](#) website, or otherwise completing the process, to seek support as outlined in the letter sent separately, or by contacting us directly. In addition, if you need any further information or support please visit [devon.cc/holidayvouchers](#) or [www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/free-school-meals-holiday-voucher-scheme](#). Parents and carers may also contact the DCC education helpline (0345 155 1019) with any questions or queries.

I also reiterate again that if your child is currently not eligible for free school meals, but because of any change in your circumstances may now be, that you please check and apply online through the [Devon Citizen's Portal](#) as soon as possible, or call the education helpline (0345 155 1019). In addition, if — because of the pandemic — you are worrying about money and are struggling to pay for basic household essentials, [further government support](#) is available. You can also apply for urgent help via the [£170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#) through funding that DCC have made available via District Council hardship funds: You can access information about the support available [here](#), or may wish to contact Early Help via one of the following addresses (you may wish to complete and send this application proforma to Early Help):

Northern Devon: [Earlyhelpnorthsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Earlyhelpnorthsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

Southern Devon: [Earlyhelpsouthsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Earlyhelpsouthsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

Mid and East Devon: [Earlyhelpmideastsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Earlyhelpmideastsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

Exeter: [Earlyhelpexetersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Earlyhelpexetersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

## Attendance

On the 'snapshot' days of Monday 15 March, 18 March and 25 March attendance in secondary schools [nationally](#), including absences for reasons related to coronavirus, was 89.0%, 88.9% and 87.4% respectively. Attendance at the College on the same days was 97.1%, 96.4% and 94.7%. This continues a similar pattern to that observed in the autumn term, where attendance of students at the College was consistently higher than attendance both nationally and across Devon. We are of course very pleased to see that our students' attendance is so high and are very grateful for the support of parents and carers. Given the disruption that students have suffered in the last year, such relatively strong attendance bodes well for the work that lies ahead of us all. To this end, I reiterate below the key expectations regarding attendance:

- Attendance is mandatory, meaning that the [usual rules](#) on attendance will apply and students 'of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.'
- Students, staff and other adults must continue to adhere to [isolation requirements](#) and not come into the school if they have one or more coronavirus symptoms, if a member of their household has coronavirus symptoms, if they are required to quarantine having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area, or if they have had a positive test.
- Where students are not able to attend school because of 'clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.' Moreover, we will provide remote education to such students, i.e., those 'who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus (COVID-19).' (Detail on how schools must record attendance in relation to coronavirus can be viewed [here](#).)
- HM Government have [confirmed](#) that shielding advice for [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) people (CEV) is now paused, meaning that from today, 1 April, CEV people are no longer advised to shield. As such CEV students and staff can and are expected to return to school from this date. See the [letter for all people on the shielded patient list](#) that has been sent to all affected people.

## Summer 2021 Awards

The full decisions from the joint Ofqual and DfE consultation on the on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded this summer were published on 25 February, and can be viewed [here](#). The full decisions from the joint Ofqual and DfE consultation on the alternative arrangements for the award of Vocational and Technical Qualifications this summer were also published on 25 February, and can be viewed [here](#).

We summarised these decisions and the accompanying detail in meetings with parents and carers and students, alongside accompanying information we have provided in previous letters, including my [letter of 2 March](#). The full decisions have also now been published from Ofqual's consultation on their proposed guidance for schools on how to determine teacher assessed grades and what evidence should be considered, and can be viewed [here](#). Further guidance has been — and is being — provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and respective exam boards. As such, we will be able to share our policy for the 'Exceptional Arrangements Summer 2021 for the Awards of GCSE, AS, A level, and Vocational and Technical Qualifications' with parents, carers and students later this month.

In the meantime, you may find the recently published JCQ '[Guidance for students, parents and guardians](#)' a useful source of up-to-date information. (You can access all JCQ support materials published for schools [here](#).) You may also find it useful to read the speeches made recently by Chair of Ofqual to [the annual conference of the Association of School and College Leaders \(ASCL\)](#), and by the Chief Regulator for Ofqual to the [National Association of Headteachers \(NAHT\)](#).

The Secretary of State for education, [in his direction to Ofqual](#), has also confirmed that students should be able to take exams in autumn 2021 if they wish to try and improve on their teacher assessed grades with which they will be issued this summer. A level exams (and any AS exams) are likely to be held in October and GCSE exams in November and December. Ofqual have opened their [consultation on how an autumn exam series should run](#), which closes at 11:45pm on 9 April 2021. Responses can be made [here](#).

## Attendance of Y11 and Y13 students and summer term provision

The DfE have now confirmed that they are not changing 'the [existing] legislation that governs compulsory school age,' which means that, as usual, students 'cease to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June [i.e. 25 June] in the year in which they turn 16' (such students are not required to attend school after this date).

Schools are required to submit Teacher Assessed Grades to exam boards by 18 June, and given that the process — as we have outlined previously — 'requires considerable staff resource,' it is likely that work done after the May half term will not contribute towards Teacher Assessed Grades. To this end we are currently in the process of planning the opportunities we will be able to provide to meet the progression needs of our students during this period. As soon as this planning has been finalised, we will confirm the precise arrangements.

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Thank you very much once again for your continued support, which we very much appreciate as always. We look forward to welcoming our students back for the summer term on Monday 19 April, but please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information in the meantime.

As ever, keep safe, and keep looking after yourself and each other.

With our warmest wishes for a happy and peaceful Easter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Brett', is positioned above the printed name.

Derrick Brett (Principal).



# ⚠ Important ⚠

Advice for schools

## CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

**A CHILD WHO DEVELOPS ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A POTENTIAL CORONAVIRUS CASE:**



### **NEW CONTINUOUS COUGH**

*This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if the child usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual)*



### **FEVER (TEMPERATURE OF 37.8°C OR HIGHER)**

*The child will also feel hot to touch on their chest or back*



### **A LOSS OR CHANGE TO SENSE OF SMELL OR TASTE**

*this means the child has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.*

**MOST CHILDREN WITH CORONAVIRUS HAVE AT LEAST ONE OF THESE SYMPTOMS.**



If a child is unwell with one or more of these specific symptoms they should be told not to come into school or sent home as soon as possible and advised to get a coronavirus test. **ONLY** those children with one or more of these symptoms or those advised by their clinician or Local Authority should get a test.



Children reporting other symptoms such as a headache, sore throat, runny or sniffly nose, earache, itchy eyes, lethargy or tiredness **WITHOUT** a fever should **NOT** be treated as potential coronavirus cases or advised to take a test.




If the national guidance on symptoms of coronavirus in children changes, updated information will be provided at a local level as soon as possible. This information about coronavirus symptoms in children can be shared with all school teaching and administration staff as well as parents and carers where necessary.

**For further guidance on coronavirus testing for schools, please read the letter from PHE and NHS Test and Trace to school and college leaders at: [bit.ly/phe-schools](https://bit.ly/phe-schools)**

# COVID-19: Restrictions in England

## From 29 March

### STEP 1b

<b>MEETING OTHERS</b>  <p>You should not mix indoors except with your household or support bubble. You can meet outdoors, including in gardens, in groups of 6 people or 2 households.</p>	<b>OVERNIGHT STAYS</b>  <p>You should not stay overnight away from home. Limited exemptions apply e.g. to stay with your support bubble.</p>	<b>EDUCATION</b>  <p>Early years settings, schools and colleges are open for all students. Students on practical university courses can return. Students and staff will be regularly tested. Other Higher Education students should continue to learn remotely.</p>	<b>WORK AND BUSINESS</b>  <p>Everyone should work from home if they can.</p>
<b>RETAIL</b>  <p>Essential shops remain open. Non-essential retail must stay closed and can only run click-and-collect and delivery.</p>	<b>BARS, PUBS AND RESTAURANTS</b>  <p>Hospitality closed aside from takeaway (until 11pm), click-and-collect, drive-through or delivery. Alcohol cannot be purchased through takeaway or click-and-collect from hospitality venues.</p>	<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>  <p>Closed, with limited exemptions.</p>	<b>PERSONAL CARE</b>  <p>Closed.</p>
<b>LEISURE AND SPORTING FACILITIES</b>  <p>Outdoor sports facilities can open, like tennis or basketball courts and open air swimming pools. Parent and child groups can take place outdoors in public spaces.</p>	<b>EXERCISE</b>  <p>You may exercise outdoors in a group of 6 or with another household. Larger groups can also take part in formally organised outdoor sports.</p>	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>  <p>Closed.</p>	<b>RESIDENTIAL CARE</b>  <p>People who live in a care home in England will be allowed 1 named visitor.</p>
<b>TRAVELLING</b>  <p>You should minimise travel as much as possible. Avoid the busiest times and routes.</p>	<b>HOLIDAYS</b>  <p>You should not go on holiday in the UK or abroad. You could be fined £5,000 for travelling abroad without a reasonable excuse.</p>	<b>PLACES OF WORSHIP</b>  <p>Places of worship can remain open and communal worship is permitted, but you must not mix with anyone outside your household or support bubble.</p>	<b>WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS</b>  <p>Funerals of up to 30 people permitted. Weddings up to 6 people permitted. Wakes and other linked ceremonial events of up to 6 permitted.</p>

Clinically extremely vulnerable people in England are no longer advised to shield from 1 April 2021, but are advised to continue taking extra precautions such as keeping social interactions low and shopping at quieter times of the day.

For more information and detailed guidance visit:  
**[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://gov.uk/coronavirus)**

COVID-19  
Let's take this next step, safely.

