

Tuesday 5 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Further to the Prime Minister's [address to the nation](#) last night regarding the new [National Lockdown](#), I am writing to clarify some key information for you, to confirm changes to the arrangements outlined in my letters of [18 December](#), [31 December](#) and [yesterday](#) (before the Prime Minister's address), and to outline for you what we know now and what we don't yet of the implications for our students. Of course, we will ensure that we continue to keep you fully and promptly informed as and when we receive more detail and clarity from HM Government.

Moving into [alert level 5](#) — where a 'COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially and there is a material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed' — and the return to the significant restrictions on [what we can and cannot do](#), is yet another challenge that this sickening pandemic has laid in front of us to face, together. And let me assure you that we are cognisant of the worry and concern that our students and families will undoubtedly have. To this end, I want to stress here that you must never hesitate to contact us should you have any worries or concerns that you feel we may be able to help with, even if this is simply in helping you to find the most appropriate avenue of support.

School closure

The College will remain open only for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, until after February half term, at the earliest. All other students will receive education remotely as outlined in my [letter](#) earlier yesterday. We know that this places pressure on you at a difficult time, but your support in helping your child engage with the remote learning as much as possible is important, and we are genuinely very grateful for it.

Provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers

Further to the information families affected received yesterday, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate some key safety messages for children attending this provision from today and throughout the period of the [National Lockdown](#). We know from your feedback to our 'Keeping in Touch (December 2020)' survey that you appreciate the lengths we have gone to and effort we have made in ensuring everyone's safety throughout the pandemic. Students have responded maturely and responsibly to the requirement that they wear a face covering in communal areas (unless exempt), in following the one-way system, and in washing their hands regularly throughout the day on entrance to and exit from classrooms. In addition, it is important to note that we are working with windows open in classrooms for ventilation.

To this end, considering the low temperatures we are experiencing alongside the need for ventilation, whilst we expect students to attend this provision in full school uniform, students may also need a few more layers of clothing to keep warm, such as sweatshirts, tights or leggings underneath skirts, or plain fleeces without a hood or large brand logos.

January 2021 examinations

All public exams and vocational assessments scheduled to go ahead this January will go ahead as planned. If your child has an exam scheduled this January, they should attend College in school uniform arriving 10 minutes before the scheduled start time. We will contact those students directly affected again to confirm attendance, but should you wish to contact the school for advice or further clarity, please do so at exams@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk. (Students who have had non-public assessments scheduled for this January cancelled should have been contacted yesterday.)

Summer 2021 examinations

The Prime Minister announced that it is not thought possible for all exams in the summer to go ahead as planned. He stated that Government 'will accordingly be working with Ofqual to consult rapidly to put in place alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly', and that further details will be set out at a later date. We will, of course, keep you promptly updated and fully informed.

Free School Meals

As I advised in my letter of [10 December](#), HM Government have provided a [£170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#) to local authorities to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter (to the end of March 2021) 'with food and bills'. We currently await further information and detail about the provision of free school meals for eligible students over the period of the new [National Lockdown](#), but commit here again to provide food parcels for all eligible students this week — eligible families have been or are being contacted to arrange delivery or collection. Our colleagues in the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust central team are investigating alternative means of providing school meals for those eligible for the remainder of the period of the [National Lockdown](#), and we will confirm arrangements as soon as we can.

Please note that if your child is currently not eligible for free school meals, but you think that because of a recent change in your circumstances they may now be, may I also urge you to please check and apply online through the [Devon Citizen's Portal](#) as soon as possible, or call the education helpline (0345 155 1019).

Device and data provision

Families who requested the loan of the device, or support with the provision of data via our 'Home Remote Access Audit (December 2020 update)' survey — in addition to the 100 laptops or so we have already loaned to students and data provision we have supported several families with — and who have not yet been contacted will be contacted as soon as possible. If you wish to contact the school directly for support, or to chase up anything, please use do so via datacheck@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk.

Maintaining contact

I outlined in my [letter yesterday](#) that to check on your child's wellbeing, to see how they are accessing their remote learning and to offer any support, tutors will be contacting home on a weekly basis by telephone or email. We commit to this again here. In addition, we will continue to use Class Charts to ask students to check-in with us (every Tuesday when tutors and members of the Pastoral Team will monitor entries) via the Wellbeing Module, which allows students to rate their wellbeing and allows us to see how they are feeling — and put in place support where needed. I attach to this letter a letter from Ms Teixeira providing more detail. In addition, of course, please do not hesitate to contact your child's tutor to seek guidance and support when required.

Rapid-result testing programme

We expect to implement the testing programme as we have been planning it when our students return. Until then, students and staff who attend the provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers will be tested as planned — should consent of course have been given — in the coming weeks. And to reiterate, we will write to all families again in due course to provide you with more information and detail about the actual tests being that we will use, the testing process, and to explain the changes as a result to isolation regulations and requirements etc.

May I once again like to take this opportunity to thank you wholeheartedly for your understanding and ongoing support in helping us to manage this unprecedented situation. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

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

Yours sincerely,



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 sniffling 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