

Friday 18 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are well and trust that you are looking forward to a peaceful Christmas.

I am writing to update you further to our communication earlier today, and further to the announcements and news reports yesterday regarding mass coronavirus testing in schools from January, and the associated staggered return to school. I want to provide you with as much clarity as is possible, and endeavour to do so through this letter, but given the information, guidance and direction we still await from HM Government, I hope you will forgive me if I fall short. I also provide you with some important reminders.

Staggered return to school in January

The Secretary of State for Education announced yesterday afternoon that the [return to secondary school in January](#) will be staggered for students in England: students in Years 11 and 13, vulnerable children and children of critical workers will all attend College in person from the start of term on 5 January, whereas all other students in all other year groups will receive full-time remote education in the first week of term (i.e. from 5 January), before returning to school in person on Monday 11 January. (Note that vocational exams scheduled for this week will go ahead as planned. Note also that if your child is scheduled to return to school on 11 January, and is eligible for free school meals, we will provide a food parcel for the week.)

Earlier this year we collected information from parents and carers regarding their status as critical workers, but we appreciate that people's circumstances may have changed. To this end, I would be grateful if you could please complete [this survey](#) to allow us to update the information we have and confirm whether you are a critical worker. We need this information as soon as you can provide it to allow us to arrange appropriate provision from 5 January (please note that the survey closes at 23:59 on 30 December).

Rapid-result, asymptomatic testing in schools from January

The Secretary of State for Education also [announced yesterday afternoon](#) a 'round of free coronavirus testing from the first week of January' for all secondary schools and colleges in England. The testing aims to identify anyone who returns to school after the Christmas break with the virus but without symptoms (and so could be spreading the disease unknowingly), to help minimise transmission and thus subsequent disruption during the spring term. This is in addition to the rollout of mass, [rapid-result coronavirus testing](#) in all secondary schools and colleges from January — [announced earlier this week on Tuesday](#) — to help detect asymptomatic cases, break chains of transmission, reduce absence and avoid the need for self-isolation. The Department for Education (DfE) have produced two Q&A blogs for parents and carers about the [mass testing in schools](#), and the [testing taking place in the first week of the spring term](#).

The DfE want as many secondary pupils as possible to be tested on our return in January ‘in advance of the serial testing and staff testing... coming into effect’ (hence the staggered return to school). Students and staff will be ‘offered 2 [lateral flow device tests](#) (LFDs)’, which are rapid tests according to [Public Health England \(PHE\)](#) that ‘help identify people who have high levels of virus who do not have symptoms and would not otherwise be coming forward for a test’. (More information on these LFD tests can be found on [page 4 here](#), and through the ‘poster’ I have appended to the end of this letter.)

Staff and students attending face-to-face education from 5 January will be offered the first testing dates, followed by other students thereafter. This would mean that ‘[w]here practical, children who are receiving remote education during the week commencing 4 January should arrive at school at a scheduled time [for their test], and then return home following their test.’ (I must stress, however, in order to manage everyone’s expectations, that whilst we will do whatever we can to roll such testing out as swiftly as possible, it may not be practicable to expect that we are able set up such testing systems — based on current plans and guidance — to carry out up to 3200 tests safely within such a time frame.)

If a student’s first LFD test is positive, ‘they should immediately self-isolate and have this positive test confirmed with a standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test’, processed in a laboratory, which ‘[checks for genetic material of the virus in the sample](#)’. If the student’s ‘first test is negative, they should be tested again 3 days later. If this test is positive, they should self-isolate and confirm this with a PCR test’.

Testing will be ‘optional but strongly encouraged’; participation is thus voluntary and ‘active consent is required’. To this end, we will in due course send out a consent form for you to complete, which gives you the option to give your consent for your child to be included in this testing, or not. — further official guidance is due next week, and we will keep you updated as is necessary, without, of course, intruding on your Christmas.

The DfE have published [information](#) on how schools can start to test students from January, and NHS Test and Trace have provided schools with [more detailed information](#), but as I am sure you will appreciate, to introduce a testing programme that works for staff and students there are a considerable amount of issues to consider, significant implications to address, and many resources to identify, secure and implement before we can roll such testing out effectively...

We will need to set up testing sites, staff them and ensure that the testing staff are appropriately trained, for some 1600 people, and must await further guidance from HM Government in this regard. But we will, as always, work as swiftly and rigorously as we can to ensure that we are as prepared as we can be on our return in January — given the notice and timing of the announcements. And whereas we will, of course, keep you updated, I must respectfully ask, once again, for your patience, understanding and cooperation — which we will undoubtedly need to call upon.

Keeping in Touch Survey

Thank you very much to the more than 300 parents and carers that have already completed our latest ‘[Keeping in Touch](#)’ survey. We have pored over the feedback we have so far received and shared some pertinent, emerging themes with all staff. If you have not yet completed the survey, may I please remind you that the opportunity to do so ends at 23:59 on 23 December. Once closed, your feedback and all

responses will be analysed, evaluated and used to inform our actions. And we will, of course, summarise and share the feedback in general for and with you.

Contact tracing over Christmas

May I remind you about the notification procedures if your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) over the Christmas period. I outlined in detail these procedures in my [last letter](#), but in short, if you do need to notify us, please use the COVID@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk email address, and complete this brief [survey](#) to provide necessary detail.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter, and, once again, for your continued support. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information.

May I also thank you again, and in advance, for your patience, understanding and cooperation as we navigate our way through another complex set of circumstances.

With our warmest wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

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

Derrick Brett (Principal).

HOW TO GET YOUR COVID-19 TEST

1



YOUR COVID-19 TEST WILL BE SCHEDULED. IF YOU ARE UNDER 16, YOUR PARENT / CARER WILL HAVE CONSENTED

2

WHEN YOU ARRIVE, SOMEONE WILL BE THERE IF YOU NEED HELP



3



YOUR TEST WILL BE FAST AND WHILE IT MIGHT FEEL A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE, IT WON'T HURT YOU

4



TO START YOU WILL BE ASKED TO OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDELY AND SAY 'AHHHH' SO A SWAB CAN BE GENTLY RUBBED ON THE BACK OF YOUR THROAT

5

AFTER 10 SECONDS, YOUR TESTING HELPER WILL CAREFULLY REMOVE THE SWAB AND GENTLY PLACE IT UP ONE OF YOUR NOSTRILS



6



THE SWAB WILL THEN BE TURNED GENTLY 5 TIMES, THIS TAKES ABOUT 10-15 SECONDS

8

YOU CAN ASK YOUR TESTING HELPER ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE BUT THAT'S IT, YOU'RE ALL DONE AND YOUR TEST IS COMPLETE



7



AFTER THIS, YOUR SWAB WILL BE REMOVED GENTLY AND PLACED ON A PAD FOR TESTING

9



YOUR SCHOOL / COLLEGE WILL CONTACT YOU OR YOUR PARENT / CARER WITH THE RESULTS AND LET YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT



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



TIER 2

HIGH ALERT

FROM 2 DEC

MEETING FRIENDS AND FAMILY  <p>No mixing of households indoors, apart from support bubbles. Maximum of six outdoors.</p>	BARS, PUBS AND RESTAURANTS  <p>Pubs and bars must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals. Venues must stop taking orders at 10pm and must close by 11pm.</p>	RETAIL  <p>Open.</p>	WORK AND BUSINESS  <p>Everyone who can work from home should do so.</p>
EDUCATION  <p>Early years settings, schools, colleges and universities open. Childcare, other supervised activities for children, and childcare bubbles permitted.</p>	INDOOR LEISURE  <p>Open.</p>	ACCOMMODATION  <p>Open.</p>	PERSONAL CARE  <p>Open.</p>
OVERNIGHT STAYS  <p>Permitted with household or support bubble.</p>	WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS  <p>15 guests for weddings, civil partnerships, wedding receptions and wakes; 30 for funerals.</p>	ENTERTAINMENT  <p>Open.</p>	PLACES OF WORSHIP  <p>Open, but cannot interact with anyone outside household or support bubble.</p>
TRAVELLING  <p>Reduce the number of journeys you make and walk or cycle if possible. Avoid busy times and routes on public transport. Avoid car sharing with those outside of your household or support bubble. Avoid entering a Tier 3 area, other than where necessary such as for work or education. Further exemptions apply.</p>	EXERCISE  <p>Classes and organised adult sport can take place outdoors, but cannot take place indoors if there is any interaction between people from different households. Organised activities for elite athletes, under-18s and disabled people can continue.</p>	RESIDENTIAL CARE  <p>COVID-secure arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, and window visits. Outdoor/airtight visits only (rollout of rapid testing will enable indoor visits including contact).</p>	LARGE EVENTS  <p>Sport, live performances and business meetings limited to 50% capacity or 2000 people outdoors (whichever is lower) and 50% capacity or 1000 people indoors (whichever is lower)</p>

Find out what support you can get

For example, if you're out of work, need to get food, or want to take care of your mental health.

[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

If you have any coronavirus symptoms:

A high temperature • A new, continuous cough
A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste.

Get a test and stay at home

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



HANDS



FACE



SPACE