

23rd December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Return to School In January 2021

As you may have seen in the news/media, the Department for Education has discussed a staggered start for students return to school in January alongside the rolling out of COVID-19 testing within schools.

This information and associated guidance was released at a very late stage in the last week of term and has since been updated with further guidance and support materials for schools being released over the Christmas period.

As things stand currently, secondary schools have been asked to stagger the return of students from January 4th 2021, whilst Primary Schools are due to return as normal at the start of term.

However, students with EHCP's, students who have critical worker parents/carers and all special schools have been asked to open as normal from the start of term.

Therefore, as things stand at the moment, **New Forest School will open as planned** after the Christmas break:

Monday 4th January: INSET day

Tuesday 5th January: All students return to school

Should anything change before January 5th we will of course contact all parents/carers and update you.

COVID-19 Testing of Students/Staff

Since Thursday December 17th, schools have been strongly encouraged to develop and run a programme of **asymptomatic lateral flow testing**, which we are working on carefully as information is released to us – full guidance is yet to come but we are making plans gradually, and in line with the information we do have thus far.

At present the school is being asked to set up testing facilities for:

1. Initial testing of all students/staff on their return to school in January.
2. Weekly testing of staff.
3. Serial testing (once a day for 7 days) of any student/staff member who has 'close contact' with a positive case to enable them to continue attending school/work as long as their daily test remains negative.

All of these tests are optional and require either consent from the parent/carer for students or consent from staff members to be tested.

Those students/staff **who do not choose to participate** in the testing programme would need to self-isolate for 10 days if they have close contact with a positive case as we have been through last term.

Consent and Further Information

In order for us to make required arrangements before the start of next term we have created an online consent form for parents/carers. This will allow us to understand how many students we need to cater for with testing.

So parents/carers are able to make an informed decision before giving completing the consent form we have created an information page on the school website which provides:

1. Details on what the Lateral Flow Test is, how it works and what students would need to do including an infographic from the NHS and a video explaining the Lateral Flow Test.
2. Information on what happens if the Lateral Flow Test is positive OR negative
3. Details of what parents/carers would be consenting to.
4. A link to our online consent form.

This webpage can be viewed at:

<http://newforestschoo.co.uk/about/coronavirus/rapid-testing/>

We will also send parents/carers a copy of this link along with a direct link to the consent form via our text message and email systems.

New Forest Care

Education



Further Updates

As I am sure you can appreciate, the landscape with respect to COVID-19 is changing daily and guidance from the Department For Education is being revised and updated frequently.

I will update parents/carers as soon as is practical should any major changes to guidance be announced or we are in a position to share more details on how the testing programme will operate at New Forest School.

Can I once again thank all parents/carers for their continued support of the school and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Kindest regards,



Duncan Smith
Headteacher