

31st December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Update on Return to School following Government Update

As you are undoubtedly aware, the Government made several major announcements on Thursday afternoon and for education settings, this was followed during the evening with updated guidance regarding schools re-opening and COVID-19 Testing including long awaited detailed guidance for schools on the training required for testing students/staff and guidance on how to organise and undertake testing.

Yesterday was spent reading through this guidance in detail and working with our health Team to plan accordingly for the safest possible return to school particularly in light of the new Tier's and current statistics for positive COVID-19 cases and deaths in the UK.

As such we are intending to make changes to the provisional, published return dates as follows.

- Key Stage 2:** Return to face to face teaching at school on Thursday 7th January
- Year 11:** Return to face to face teaching at school on Thursday 7th January
- Year 7-10:** Return to face to face teaching at school on Monday 11th January

Tuesday 5th January: remote learning will be in place for all students via our Virtual Learning Environment but not via Teams (due to staff attending COVID-19 testing).

Wednesday 6th January onwards: Until students return to face to face teaching in school, remote learning will be in place via our virtual learning environment and Microsoft Teams.

Wednesday 6th January – Friday 8th January: Students who are participating in testing (consent provided via the online consent form) will be invited to attend school at specific times/slots for COVID-19 testing.

Rationale For Changes:

I am fully aware this is a late change to our original plan and is not how we would have wanted our term to start however this difficult decision has been made in light of updated guidance, requirements for mass testing and most importantly to keep students, staff and the wider school community as safe as possible.

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These changes will allow for:

Monday 4th January:

Receipt of COVID-19 testing kits (this is the date provided by Department of Education for receipt of equipment).

Required staff training of our testing team including attendance on DfE/NHS webinars that are being run on Monday 4th January and online training that has now been released.

Completing the set up of our testing facility at the Totton Site (as much work as possible has already been done on this over the Christmas Break).

All non-essential staff will remain at home preparing the remote learning for students.

Tuesday 5th January:

Education staff will receive COVID-19 testing throughout the day at specific times/slots.

This will allow us to see any potential loss of staff through asymptomatic positive tests and plan accordingly whilst safely returning staff to school.

Wednesday 6th January onwards:

Student mass testing to begin – priority given to Year 11 students on Wednesday 6th to provisionally return to face to face teaching at school on Thursday 7th January.

We have opted for these dates to minimise remote learning and time away from school for students (particularly KS2 and Year 11 students) but also provide enough of a buffer for any unforeseen issues, for example testing kits not arriving on Monday 4th January.

I hope this will avoid further late changes and disruption for students, staff and parents/carers and allow everyone to plan accordingly.

COVID-19 Testing Oversight:

Our testing process, from staff training on Monday 4th January through to ongoing implementation this term, is being overseen by our two Registered Mental Health Nurses and I am incredibly grateful for their input and support over the last couple of days as we have scrutinised the guidance materials and made appropriate plans.

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Personal Contact to Parents/Carers

On Monday 4th January, the Senior Leadership Team will make contact with all parents/carers by phone to discuss these plans and provide an opportunity for you to ask any questions and share any concerns.

Critical Worker Parents/Carers

If any parent/carer is classed as a critical worker and these changes present an issue then the Senior Leadership Team will be able to discuss this on Monday 4th January during our phone calls and put any required plans in place.

Final Thoughts

As ever, I remain incredibly grateful for your support of the school in these continually challenging times. I hope that the positive news regarding vaccines and their rollout in the UK does provide us with the much needed light at the end of the tunnel.

Whilst this letter is not the way I would have liked my first communication of 2021 to be, I truly believe these measures will allow us to ensure the highest possible levels of safety for the students, staff and all parents/carers at a critical time during the pandemic.

I would like to wish you all a very happy and safe New Year and look forward to welcoming the students back to New Forest School as soon as possible.

Kindest regards,



Duncan Smith
Headteacher