

New Forest Care

Education



20th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this letter finds you all safe and well and that you have managed to have an enjoyable half term within the restrictions that the national lockdown brings.

We are looking forward to welcoming our students back on Tuesday 23rd February (a reminder that, as per the school calendar, Monday 22nd February is an INSET day).

I wanted to make all parents/carers aware of some important decisions that the school will need to make next week.

Major Announcements Regarding the National Lockdown

As I am sure you are all fully aware, Monday 22nd February will see a major announcement by the Government regarding their roadmap for bringing England out of the current national lockdown.

Returning students to education has continually been discussed in Westminster as being given major priority in this roadmap.

For New Forest School, the announcement will likely have less of an impact on us than students/staff in mainstream primary/secondary schools as we have remained very much open throughout the lockdown and currently have more than 90% of students physically attending school.

However, the Government announcement and Department for Education guidance that will be released following it will provide an indication of how we move forward this half term and to what extent we can return to a more 'normal' form of operation.

At present, **our intention remains to maintain our current 'class bubble' approach and timetable until Friday 5th March** (the first two weeks of the half term).

As soon as sufficient details of the Governments Roadmap and guidance for schools are released I will be meeting with our COVID-19 Team (Directors, health team and key staff) and then with the schools Senior Leadership Team to assess the announcement, guidance and requirements for schools.

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The three key questions New Forest School have to consider are:

1. When will all students need to return to school – i.e. when will the parental choice over attendance be removed from DFE guidance.
2. When will we be able to safely return to students moving around the school site to lessons with subject teachers rather than being single classroom based with a dedicated staff team.
3. When will we be able to safely mix day students and students who reside in our Care Homes.

As with all decisions taken so far, the safety of students, parents/carers and staff will remain paramount in any changes we make whilst balancing the educational needs of the students.

I will share as much information as I am able to with all parents/carers as soon as possible.

Year 11 Exams

In a previous letter, I outlined the consultation process being undertaken by the Department for Education and OFQUAL.

This consultation period has finished but to date we have not received the final guidance or exact plan for students who would have sat exams this summer other than their grades will be based on teacher assessments.

We are starting to hear snippets of information and possible plans through education media sources and I hope to receive the official guidance very shortly.

Once again, as soon as we are made aware of exactly how Year 11 assessments will happen this summer I will share this information with parents/carers.

Current COVID Measures

I would like to reassure all parents/carers that we will continue follow the full range of COVID measures we had in place last half term. These include:

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1. Class Bubble Timetables with staggered break and lunch times to ensure minimal interaction between different classes (students & staff).
2. Part time timetable (4 days on school site, 1 day remote learning - except for Year 11) to keep numbers of students/staff on site to safe level.
3. No mixing of day and care students within class bubbles to reduce potential routes of transmission.
4. Social distancing guidance to be followed.
5. Enhanced expectations for hand washing/sanitisation.
6. Enhanced cleaning of all school sites (daily and bi-weekly regimes).
7. Regular anti-bacterial fogging of whole school sites.
8. Use of Type IIR Face Masks by all education staff (optional for students).
9. Twice weekly Lateral Flow Testing of all education staff.
10. Close contact tracing and self-isolation of students/staff identified following any positive case.
11. Anti-bacterial fogging of any school site with a positive case identified.
12. No external visitors on school sites unless in exceptional circumstances (for example emergency maintenance).

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the school is updated on a regular basis to reflect any changes we have made.

Final Thoughts

As always, I remain very grateful for your ongoing support of the school during the pandemic and the current national lockdown.

I look forward to being able to share our plans going forward as soon as possible once the Government Roadmap and DFE guidance is published.

Kindest regards,



Duncan Smith
Headteacher