

New Forest Care Education

20th January 2021

COVID-19 Update

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to update you all on the current situation for New Forest School and plans going forward.

The Latest DFE Guidance

Gavin Williamson (Secretary of State for Education) has this morning sent a letter to all schools and colleges with updated information. Two key updates I wish to share with you are:

1. The DFE have now 'paused' use of Lateral Flow Tests to avoid staff/students having to self-isolation following discussions with Public Health England and the NHS.

We will however continue to test students who having given consent on their return to school. In addition, staff are now to be tested twice a week.

2. The DFE are stating they are keeping plans for the return to school and college under continuous review and will '*inform schools, colleges and parents ahead of the half term*'.

I sincerely hope that if there are to be any major changes this happens in a more timely manner than over the Christmas/New Year period – I will of course share anything we hear as soon as possible.

It would also appear from mainstream media that various categories of key workers (police, firefighters and teachers) may move up the vaccination list to assist with full re-opening of schools.

Block 2 Plans & Survey

At the start of term, I wrote to explain we are dividing this half term into two blocks:

Block 1: Until Friday 22nd January

Block 2: From Monday 25th January until Friday 12th February

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I have today created a new parent survey to cover Block 2 and would be very grateful if all parents/carers could complete this – it is very swift to do and helps me enormously with planning.

The survey can be found at: <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90309501/NFS-Block-2-COVID-19-Survey>

All day students attending will remain in class bubbles with their dedicated staff team as per block 1.

During Block 1 all students who reside in one of New Forest Care's Children's Homes have remained at home and accessed the remote learning. However, unless the local situation with COVID-19 changes drastically, these students will be returning to school from Monday 1st February.

In order to do so as safely as possible for all students and staff, these students will be taught in class bubbles with the other children from the same care home rather than return to their normal class groups. This means that day students and students who reside in care homes will be on the same school site but not mixing in classes.

This does mean that we will have a significant number of students and therefore staff, on all school sites, so in order to keep the situation as safe as possible and maintain appropriate social distancing as well as maintain class bubbles, we are likely to need to put in place a part time timetable for all students **except Year 11 and Key Stage 2 students**.

At present, we believe this is possible to achieve with all students attending 4 days per week which means students will have one day per week accessing remote learning. This would start from Monday 1st February

I am currently looking at how best to achieve this and hope to be in a position to share with parents/carers early next week.

Exams

The Department for Education has released a consultation document on how the 2021 Exam Series will be run. This can be found at: <https://bit.ly/39Hmb7S>

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We have already reviewed the document and shared with all teaching staff in order to begin preparing and assess any potential impact for New Forest School. As soon as the final guidance is released we will share more detailed plans for New Forest School.

The 'At A Glance' overview of the consultation from the DFE is:

- Teachers provide replacement grades for A-levels and GCSEs
- Evidence could include coursework, essays, tests and homework
- External tests set by exam boards, but likely to be marked in school
- Results early July
- Vocational exams will use teachers' grades, but separate arrangements for practical skills

Final Thoughts

As ever, please can I extend a huge thank you to all parents/carers for your ongoing support as we endeavour to keep all New Forest School students educated as safely as possible.

Kindest regards,



Duncan Smith
Headteacher