



18th December 2020

Start of Term (January 2021) Arrangements and COVID-19 Test Centre Plans

Dear Parent/Carer,

They say a week is a long time in politics, but it is starting to feel like a day is a very long time in schools. I wrote to you yesterday in my End of Term Update letter (17th December) outlining our expectation that all of our pupils and Sixth Form students would return to school on Monday 4th January.

Since sending that letter - and on our final day of term - the government has announced new expectations for secondary schools and their pupils returning after Christmas. This announcement was completely unexpected and the rationale for this change of plan has not been adequately explained to us.

On Monday 4th January, only Year 11 and Year 13 students should return to school. Lessons for these two year groups will operate normally throughout the first week of term and beyond, and all of our school bus routes will continue to operate. In addition, **Year 10 BTEC Travel and Tourism students should attend school for their exam on Friday 8th January.**

For all other year groups, pupils should stay at home and will access lessons remotely (based on their normal timetable) with live lessons conducted through Microsoft Teams. Pupils in Years 7-10 and Year 12 will then all return to school full-time from Monday 11th January.

Children of 'critical workers' and 'vulnerable' children from all year groups can attend school as normal from Monday 4th January. A definition of vulnerable children, and a full list of the occupations which the government defines as 'critical workers' can be accessed through the link below:

[Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings)

In addition, the government has also announced that all secondary schools are expected to set-up and operate their own COVID-19 Rapid Testing Centre from January. I understand further guidance on this will be issued to schools next week, but the Press Release from the Education Secretary, published late yesterday says:

'The government has today (17 December) confirmed that all secondary schools and colleges in England will be able to test more of their staff and students in a round of free coronavirus testing... Schools and colleges will be able to establish testing to offer students two rapid tests three days apart, with positive results confirmed by a lab-based PCR test.

Guidance will shortly be provided to schools and colleges on how to set up and staff the testing sites. Armed forces personnel will support directly through planning with schools and colleges.

Testing will be optional but strongly encouraged, particularly in areas of higher prevalence of the virus. Consent will be required from the student or parent as appropriate.'

The full press release can be viewed through the link below:



[Staggered rollout of coronavirus testing for secondary schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

As you will appreciate, the current lack of detail on these proposals as we head into the Christmas holiday period means that I am unable to tell you very much more at this stage. However, I expect to write to parents again in January to update you on our plans, and to give you the opportunity to provide consent for the school to administer COVID Tests to your child.

Speaking in parliament this morning, the Schools Minister has said that it is the government's intention that secondary school staff will get routine weekly tests from January and that staff and pupils who were close contacts of positive cases will also get a daily test for seven days so they don't have to self-isolate.

The DFE has also announced that schools will be sent additional tests so that secondary pupils can have two tests, three days apart in the new year, even if they are not a close contact of a confirmed case.

I am extremely sorry that I cannot provide any further detail to you at this stage as this has not been shared with schools. Unfortunately, at the present time our information is confined largely to government press releases and statements made by Ministers in the House of Commons.

Thank you for your continuing support of our school as we continue to navigate the ever-changing guidance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Guest', followed by a large, stylized circular flourish.

Mark Guest
Headteacher