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18 December 2020

Dear parents and carers

You will be aware that the Department for Education has made a number of announcements this week about plans for the new term. We are writing to you to share what we know and what it means for pupils and students in our schools.

January re-opening

The Department for Education announced yesterday that the start of the new term will be staggered for some students. Schools have been asked to open as usual for all year groups from Reception to Year 6, for students in Years 11 and 13 and for pupils and students in all year groups if they are the children of critical workers or are young people who are considered “vulnerable”.

Arrangements in our schools will, therefore, be as follows.

- All schools will be closed to all year groups on Monday 4 January for the planned training day published in our school calendars
- Primary schools fully open for all pupils from Tuesday 5 January
- Secondary schools open for students in Years 11 and 13 from Tuesday 5 January
- Students in Years 7 – 10 and Year 12 should remain at home from Tuesday 5 January to Friday 8 January, unless they are the children of critical workers or are considered “vulnerable”
- Students in Years 7 – 10 and Year 12 who are at home will have access to a full timetable of remote learning, with live remote teaching from their teacher
- Children of critical workers and students who are considered “vulnerable” who come to school will be supervised in computer rooms and will have access to the same live remote lessons as students working from home

Students who are eligible for free school meals who are working at home will receive a £15 supermarket voucher. This will be provided and organised by your school.

Please use the link below to let us know if your child is accessing the school’s provision for critical workers or those considered “vulnerable” so that we can plan for those attending school.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=FQwRfuQAF0eCEfeLYA6iFPbe4lnaqhROuA0Ejw_09htUNFpOSjExVONMS0NBOTJJCWldRT0I2TUIjWi4u

Remote Learning will take place on Teams and students are expected to follow their normal timetable. A link to a video explaining how to access Teams can be found on the schools VLE home page.



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Coronavirus testing in schools

The government has also announced testing for students and staff will be made available in secondary schools from 4 January 2021. The announcement was a surprise to schools and we are working as hard as we can to get more information about what this might look like. There are several issues we need to understand more about, including the efficacy of the tests, how many students each day might need to be tested, how the testing might be administered and what external support will be available. We are working closely with our local authorities and local health protection teams and have asked for more information from the Department for Education.

As they have been throughout the pandemic, our main priorities are to keep children, staff and families safe, and to contribute to minimising the spread of Coronavirus. Through good planning, hard work of staff and the support of parents, our schools have had attendance levels significantly above national averages, despite our areas having some of the highest infection rates in the country. Next term we will support and deliver anything that keeps more young people in school safely and when we know more about whether testing in schools can help with this, we will share that with you.

In the meantime, we want to assure you that if and when testing takes place in a school, a student can only be tested with the explicit consent of a parent/carer and parents/carers retain the right to withhold consent.

We will be in touch with you again in the new year when we know more.

Finally

As we finish a school term like no other, we would like to thank you for all the support so many parents have given us this year and to thank all our staff for everything they have done to keep our schools open, to keep people safe and to continue to educate our young people whether they have been in school or at home. In spite of the many difficulties and challenges, it remains a privilege to work with the young people in our schools every day and to be inspired by the great things they do.

We would like to wish you and your families the very best.

Yours faithfully,

Jonny Uttley
CEO

Richard Williman
Headteacher



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