



Tuesday 23 February 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Sixth Form Students

I trust you all had a restful half term and have been heartened by the speed of the vaccine rollout and the Prime Minister's [roadmap for leaving lockdown](#). It is abundantly clear how keen we all are to return to all of our normal routines and activities, even with one or two continued adjustments.

At the end of this week, I am confident that we can set out our plans for the reopening of our school to all students *on or from* 8 March 2021. Whilst news coverage of the reopening of schools is widespread, there has not been a great deal of emphasis, yet, on how the speed of reopening is tied to the speed at which students can be tested on their return to school. Furthermore, there remains a number of unanswered questions that will need to be resolved before we can confirm and communicate our plans. Thankfully, there is sufficient time to plan with care and attention to detail.

You will be aware that all students will be strongly encouraged to take *three* lateral flow tests in the days and weeks following their return. I have written to you about this before and remind parents, carers and sixth form students of the need to complete the correct consent form *as soon as possible* using [this link to our special web page](#), devoted to lateral flow testing. We now learn that this testing will be followed by the provision of home testing kits that will be distributed to all families towards the middle / end of March. I will share more on this when it becomes available.

Ideally, we would like all students to return *on* Monday 8 March, rather than *from* Monday 8 March. If this is permissible then we shall do this, but we may have to adopt a staggered reopening that allows for students to return and undertake their first test on the day they return to school. It would be impossible for us to safely and correctly conduct 1000+ tests in a single day and this is why we, and many other schools, have sought additional guidance from the Department for Education on these matters. It is for this reason that I ask us all to live with a little uncertainty for a few more days. We will need to be ready for either a full resumption of face-to-face lessons for all on Monday 8 March, or a staggered return of year groups; involving more and more face-to-face lessons on site and fewer remote lessons, throughout the week beginning 8 March. In any case, all students will be back in school by or on Friday 12 March 2021.

I hope that you know we are very conscious of your twin desire to return to normal but to do so safely. On Friday, I plan to issue an updated reopening booklet (based on the version you were sent back in September) and seek to anticipate the most likely questions you will have.

Yours faithfully

Mr Doherty

Headteacher