

24th February 2021

Return to school for all students

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will no doubt be aware, the Prime Minister announced on Monday that all students would start returning to schools from Monday 8th March. We are delighted at this announcement and look forward to seeing our students back for face-to-face learning as soon as possible.

Prior to their return, the government has requested that all secondary school students be tested for coronavirus using lateral flow tests, which generate results within 30 minutes. Each student should be tested three times, at school, with a gap of at least three days between each test.

Lateral flow testing is optional; however, it should be remembered that these testing arrangements are vital in the national response to limiting the impact of coronavirus on communities. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. By testing, we will help to reduce the spread in school settings through asymptomatic transmission. I am, therefore, strongly encouraging all students to be tested. Parental consent must be gained for all students under the age of 16.

As you'll appreciate, we are a large school and getting our students tested three times on their return to school will be a major challenge. It is for this reason that I would like to gain consent from parents and carers as soon as possible. This will assist us greatly on our return to school.

It is my intention to write to you again early next week to set out the arrangements for our return to school, in full. Due to the requirement to test students and staff on their return to school it is likely this will include a staggered return, with different year groups returning on different days. All students will return to school the week beginning 8th March.

In the meantime, I would be grateful if you could consider the information below regarding lateral flow testing and provide your consent as outlined.

Plan for testing

We will be looking to test all staff and students as they return to school. Students will be offered three lateral flow device tests spaced 3 to 5 days apart.

Home testing is being introduced for secondary age pupils by the Government. It is important that students are initially supervised whilst swabbing to make sure they are doing it correctly. This is why testing will initially take place in schools at asymptomatic testing sites. Once students have been tested three times they will be provided with home test kits for regular, twice weekly, testing at home.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose and throat. Students administer their own test with the guidance of staff. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant using the details provided on the consent form (see below).

The school will inform the student and parent of any positive test result. A text/email notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system will be provided using the details submitted in the registration process. Please note, lateral flow tests are free of charge.

I enclose a leaflet with further information about how the test is taken.

What if my child tests positive?

If a student tests positive on a lateral flow device test they must follow national UK guidance and self-isolate.

What happens if the test is negative?

While a small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, students who test negative will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. Students / parents will be informed of negative test results via text/email.

What if students have been in close contact with someone in school who tests positive?

The student will be notified that they are a close contact by the school. National self-isolation guidance must then be followed.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (including a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Consent for testing

In order for students to be tested as part of the test and trace programme consent is needed from parents. To consent, please complete the consent form by following this link <https://tinylink.net/qucmn> Consent must be received by Friday 26th February.

We know these tests work – in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

We will support our students throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions at all
Yours faithfully,



Miss M Green
Head of Academy