

2nd January 2021

Dear parent or carer

In my last letter that was sent to you on the 28th December, I did say that I would write to you again with an update once more information was available regarding the school's restart in January.

As you are no doubt aware, the Secretary of State for Education made an announcement on the evening of the 30th of December stating that secondary schools would now be expected to restart after Christmas on the **11th January** and not on the 5th January as per the previous instruction received at the end of last term.

The later than originally planned start is to give secondary schools the opportunity to set up properly as test centres for students and staff. The later start is also a reflection on the current situation regarding very high infection rates in higher tier areas which is of course affecting us directly in London at the moment.

I still remain clear that I do agree that face-to-face education is by far the best option in ensuring that students make the best progress in their learning but of course this has to be balanced out by how safe students and staff are at school. Therefore, I do think that pursuing a strategy of mass testing in secondary schools is the right course of action here so we continue to stay on track to achieve this.

For clarity here, here is a summary of key dates and activities which I'm hoping you will find useful...

In the first week back, the **4th January remains a non teaching training day** for staff focused on learning and teaching development as previously planned. In addition now, myself, Mr Raw and Ms Sorba will also be accessing 3 separate Public Health England training sessions over both the 4th and 5th of January. These training sessions will add to the training I undertook over the winter break and are focused on ensuring we have all the correct information and guidance to set up an effective on-site testing centre.

Incidentally, testing kits, analysis equipment and heavy duty PPE is arriving at school on the 4th January.

The rest of the first week back from the 5th to the 8th of January is a crucial time as we will be busy setting up the testing centre at school. The school will only be open for children classified as vulnerable or the children of key workers e.g. NHS. All other students will be at home during that week.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team on a rota, will be providing on site supervision for these children. The Learning Support Team will be contacting qualifying families on Monday, the 4th of January with more information.

Please note that it would be immensely helpful if a valid negative Covid statement was available for any student coming into school that week. It is also a given that any qualifying child here can only access school supervision if they are not self isolating.

In line with additional instructions received from the DFE yesterday, I have asked teachers and learning mentors at school to **prioritise contact and learning support for Year 11 students through the week but regardless of your child's year group, please ensure that your child engages with any learning activity set by their teachers in that first week or was not completed in the last week before the school holiday.**

On the 11th January, unless they are Covid positive or self isolating, Year 11 will return to school for face to face learning. Children classified as vulnerable or key worker children will also be on site and supervised by available members of staff during the week.

All other year groups will be remote learning at home. As previously, this remote learning will be a balance of Google Classroom and other learning platform activity alongside a balance of live lessons.

Students from Year 11 and all staff will be lateral flow tested using the new equipment before lessons begin if they don't have a valid negative Covid test statement or have had and recovered from the virus previously.

Year 11 will need to arrive at school at 10am on the 11th January to allow the Testing Team to carry out the tests.

Normal lessons will begin at 11am i.e. Period 3.

Test samples will be analysed during the day and the results of these shared with students and families as soon as possible with positive tests being shared on immediately.

If a child fails the lateral flow test then they will be removed from their class and isolated on site until they can leave or leave immediately if families authorise us to do that once contact is made with home.

Any student or member of staff that has been in contact with the infected individual will then be tested as a priority at the end of the school day.

For the remaining year groups during the week beginning 11th of January, every year group will be invited in for a testing appointment at school and then dismissed whilst the test is analysed with test outcomes being sent to families as soon as data is available. More information will be provided next week as to when individual year groups need to come in for their tests and how test results will be shared with families.

Families should note that Monday 18th January marks the return of all students to the school for face to face learning. The Secretary of State and the DFE have asked all schools to ensure that students and staff are all tested on a rolling weekly basis and we intend to do our best to achieve that.

Obviously this is very likely to be an intense time for leaders, school staff and students whilst we manage opening the school alongside testing large numbers of students and staff and rest assured I will be accessing any Tower Hamlets Local Authority support and the Army and direct OFSTED support promised by the Secretary of State to ensure we are getting everything right here.

Finally, I hope you have managed to make the most of the winter break and although staff will need to contact you with more information next week, I hope that this letter helps you feel more informed regarding the next few weeks of your child's education and safety at this challenging time for us all.

Best wishes and stay safe



Gary Nelson

Headteacher