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Headteacher: Mrs Emma Anderson

Chair of Governors: Mr Steve Chew

Our ref: CJ/SD/RCY

1 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

The weekend of better weather and the on-going roll out of the vaccine by the Government further supports the hope and optimism from Friday's letter that there is light at the end of the tunnel. This week sees us approaching an end to remote learning in its current format; we can all breathe that collective sigh of relief and start to think about returning to normal routines with school central to these routines. This is the first letter of two letters planned for this week with this letter setting out the timings and details for testing and a second letter on Friday explaining the full details of the return to school.

Lateral Flow Device Testing

As part of the return to school we will be supporting the national effort to tackle Covid-19 by ensuring any students with parental consent can take a lateral flow device test. We have an established test centre and our staff have been tested each week since we returned following the winter break. During this period of testing, we have reported zero positive cases. We are very proud of our staff who have followed the rules diligently during this time.

A lateral flow device test is a swab test and if you have consented your child will have to take a sample from their tonsils at the back of their throat and at the top of their nasal passage. Staff will supervise this process and please be assured if your child experiences discomfort and cannot complete the test they will not be forced to carry on and we will make contact home to discuss this with you. Please note that if your child has tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 90 days, any test may be inaccurate.

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During the testing period, we will be providing two tests before our students return to school and one test during lesson time. If a child returns a positive result, parents will have to arrange a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test with the NHS. If the PCR result is positive, the whole household must isolate in line with Government guidance.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/what-your-test-result-means/>

Following the completion of our school testing on Friday 12 March 2021 consenting parents will be provided with two lateral flow devices to test their own child at home, twice per week, with each test being 3-5 days apart. Students will be offered the chance to have three tests in school before home testing commences. For home tests, parents or carers must administer and log their child's results on the NHS Track and Trace database on the website or by telephone. Parents conducting home tests are legally obliged to report the results. Further details on home testing will follow nearer the time when this is due to commence.

Please remember that we must have consent if you want your child to take part in our testing plan. Taking a lateral flow device is voluntary but will support the national effort to tackle Covid-19. If you do not want your child to be tested, they will return to school on Wednesday 10 March 2021.

Please also note that if your child has any of the symptoms associated with Covid-19 they should not be sent to school for a lateral flow device test. Lateral flow device tests are to identify individuals who are a-symptomatic (individuals who have the virus but do not present symptoms). If anyone has symptoms, they should follow the established systems and book a PCR test.

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If your child is currently attending the in-school provision during lockdown testing will commence on Tuesday 2 March 2021.

The dates for your Year 9 students to attend school are as follows;

Test 1 - Friday 5 March 2021

- 10:30am until 11:15am (Any student with a surname beginning with the letters A through to L)
- 11:15am until 12:00pm (Any student with a surname beginning with the letters M through to Z)

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Test 2 - Tuesday 9 March 2021

- 10:30am until 11:15am (Any student with a surname beginning with the letters A through to L)
- 11:15am until 12:00pm (Any student with a surname beginning with the letters M through to Z)

Test 3 - Friday 12 March 2021

- This test will take place in lesson and students are to attend school as normal

Please be aware that Friday 5 March 2021 is an INSET Day and no remote learning will take place.

Free School Meals

Due to the week commencing 8 March 2021 involving a staggered return for our students we will be offering a Free School Meal Voucher for the days students are not in school at the free school meal daily rate. Families that claim Free School Meals are eligible for a food voucher to help support any time spent at home during the staggered return to school. These will be issued week commencing 8 March and if you need any assistance with these vouchers please contact freeschoolmeals@merciatrust.co.uk.

We have previously talked about this 'Allied Effort' and we must all continue to follow the guidance, protect the NHS and ultimately save lives. We are edging closer to fully re-opening our wonderful school again and this is one more step we have to take on this journey. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to be in touch thank you for all your on-going support.

Yours faithfully



Mr C Jenkinson
Co-Headteacher



Mr Dawson
Co-Headteacher