



West Hatch High School

A Specialist Business and Enterprise School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I'd like to apologise in advance for the length of this letter. As I'm sure you are aware there is a significant amount of information I need to provide you; I hope this letter gives you clarity on our return to school following the Prime Minister's announcement that schools will begin to reopen on Monday 8th March. Please note that I will be sending further clarity for our Year 11 and 13's families regarding examinations once we have assimilated the information we have been provided. I have however attached a document from Ofqual which may help your understanding.

Testing and Re-Opening Plans

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance stipulates that three lateral flow tests are required for those students who provide consent, before moving to home testing. This is to ensure students have undertaken some testing in a supervised setting, and have had the chance to familiarise themselves with self-swabbing.

In addition, it is a requirement for these students to secure a negative test result before they can recommence onsite education. The Government has told schools to stagger their start for students to allow for the logistical challenge of testing up to 1600 students and staff three times within a 15 day period.

As you are aware, we have been working with Essex County Council this week who have been discussing plans with the DfE to support schools across the region with the testing process. The County Council have now put in place community testing to allow schools to reduce the number of tests they need to provide before they distribute home kits to students to complete outside of school. Their rationale is as follows:

Students accessing a test before coming to school reduces the risk of transmission via public/school transport and mixing at school. Accessing a test locally negates the need to travel across the county to attend school, because they can access their most local testing site.

This test is with a clinically trained individual, who assists with the test but also provides training and information regarding the swabbing, processing and reading the result. This is a more robust method than student's trialling self-swabbing at school and then waiting 30 minutes for the results to be given to them. This does not give sufficient training around processing the tests or interpreting results.

Below you will see the timetable for return for all of our students. As soon as we have information on how parents can access the community testing we will send this out. This is the suggested approach outlined by Essex County Council based on the advice of Public Health. It allows us to fulfil the requirement of the DfE of a staggered start, testing students 3-5 days apart while limiting disruption to students learning as much as possible, which would undoubtedly occur were we to complete the first test in school. Students who do not give consent will return to school at the same time as their peers and will not be penalised for not having a test. However, I urge families to support this testing in order to limit the spread of the virus, keep everyone in our community safe and ensure your children are in school rather than isolating at home due to close contacts with positive cases. I wanted to note that we are only able to return in this way because of the number of volunteers we have had for testing from our school community, all of whom will



have received thorough training. Thank you for those who have volunteered to support the school with the testing programme.

Timetable for Return

4th – 7th March – local Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) for students in Years 10-13.

8th March - students in Years 10-13 return to school and commence face to face lessons.

8th/9th March – 2nd LTF testing for students in Year 10 – 13 *

11th/12th March – 3rd LTF testing for students in Year 10 – 13 *

8th – 12th March – Years 7-9 remain at home receiving online lessons.

Home testing kits will then be distributed to students in Year 10-13 during this week.

11th – 14th March - local LFT testing for students in Years 7-9.

15th March - students in Years 7-9 return to school and commence face to face lessons.

15th/16th March – 2nd LTF testing for students in Year 7-9*

18th/19th March – 3rd LFT testing for students in Year 7-9*

Home testing kits will then be distributed to students in Year 7-9 during this week.

*this is only for students for whom we have received consent.

Face Masks

I am aware that following the PM's announcement there have been a number of our families who have been quite anxious about the suggestion that face masks were to be made mandatory for all students and staff throughout the day. Since the start of the school year the Governors and I have requested that all students wear face masks during their transition time whenever they are in the school building. This has been supported fantastically by our parents and student body, for which I am very thankful; it has meant everyone in our community has felt safe and I'm sure it has helped us to limit the spread of the virus. The Government advice on face coverings is as follows:

*Where pupils in year 7 (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31 August 2020) and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings do not need to be worn by pupils when outdoors on the premises. **In addition, we now also recommend in those schools, that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained.** This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons.*

The guidance goes on to say that:

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- *Cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties.*
- *Speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate.*

In my letter in September I outlined our rationale for asking students to wear facemasks around the building and explained that if parents believed their child to be exempt, they were required to contact their child's Head of House to discuss the matter and request an exemption card. This continues to be the situation and **any student who does not have an exemption card will be required to wear a face mask at all times within the school building.** Fortunately, the majority of our students are able to move outside of the buildings often between lessons where they will be able to remove their face coverings.

Please note that the DfE guidance states that face coverings are only required when social distancing cannot be maintained. Teachers are therefore not required to wear a mask when teaching at the front of the class within their two metre box but will place one on if they move around the room and at other times moving around inside the school.

The School Curriculum

On Friday 5th March students will receive pre-planned lessons, there will be no live lessons on this day. This is to enable Departments to plan effectively to reintegrate our students back into school and also thoroughly plan their curriculum and assessment programme for our Year 11 and 13 students. All students should log onto their MS Teams area at their normal timetabled lesson time on Friday.

Home Learning when School is Open and Students are Isolating

From the 8th March (Years 10 -13) and 15th March (Years 7- 9) we will be reverting to our Autumn Term Remote Learning Plan for those students isolating at home. Staff are asked to produce a lesson for students, that ensures they do not fall behind their peers if they have to isolate. Our aim is to upload lessons prior to the timetabled lesson period, however this is not always possible. Students who are isolating at home should access their class MS Teams area and contact their teacher if they need additional support; teachers will be providing face to face lessons in school and will respond when they are able to do so.

Our staff have worked hard to ensure our students have continued to receive their full curriculum entitlement and we aim to seamlessly move from remote learning to face to face lessons.

Covid Catch-up

I don't often share news articles but the following one on the BBC is a nice summary of a lot of the material that we have seen on this.

[Covid: Catch-up narrative putting 'huge pressure' on children, psychologists say - BBC News](#)

It is clear that there will be some need to revisit and reassess material that has been covered in this lockdown but I think it is also really important that we focus on what students have gained at this time as well. The vast majority of our students have engaged in everything that we have asked them to do through this lockdown and have developed skills of independent learning that they would not have had the same opportunity to develop in normal times. These will stand them in very good stead in the future. Equally, there are some that have struggled to achieve to the best of their ability at home and we will look at how we can further support these students upon their return to school. What is really important to emphasise to all students is that, provided that they maintain a commitment to their studies and follow the school's advice, there is no need for anxiety about their work and we will work with them to ensure that they are well placed for future success.

Once again apologies for the length of this letter. I want to finish by saying how exceptionally proud I have been of our students and staff during this lockdown, many of whom have really gone the extra mile. We can all now see the light at the end of the tunnel but we also know that the next stage of lockdown relaxation will only occur if students across the country follow the rules and limit the spread of the virus; we all remember the difficulties we all faced before the Christmas holidays. I therefore urge you to get your children tested and support us in our expectations relating to masks so that we can keep everyone in our community safe.

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Leonard
Headteacher