

18th December 2020

Dear Parents and Students

Introduction

Following the unexpected announcement from government yesterday regarding a staggered start to next term, which followed the equally unexpected announcement on Wednesday about rapid COVID-19 testing in schools from January, I am writing to inform you of our plans for the first week of the new term.

I think it is important to stress that the information we have received from central government, so far, is very limited in relation to rapid COVID-19 testing and we are urgently awaiting further details in order to inform planning for this. As I write this letter, we have had no rapid tests kits delivered to school (these are not expected in school until the first week of the new term, at the earliest), no training (including safety training) is yet available for staff involved with administration of these tests, nor have we had the template letter required to seek parental/student consent. As you will appreciate, the logistics of such testing for a school of 1700 students and 160 staff needs careful planning in order to ensure it is conducted safely and effectively. It is essential we receive comprehensive guidelines in order to achieve this.

Given the above, and the estimation by the DfE and NHS that it will take an hour to test 30 students, I, like most Headteachers, do not expect this rapid testing to be in place within the first week of the new term. Indeed, such testing may well not be up and running until the middle of January, at the earliest.

Please be reassured, the health and safety of our students and staff is paramount in our thinking. Getting the safety aspects of this programme and the logistics of this process right may take us some time. I know this is a concern shared by Headteachers throughout the country, as we strive to get this right.

In line with government advice, I have therefore taken the decision to designate **Monday 4th January 2021** as an additional **Training Day** to allow us to put in place the necessary plans and protocols, following this latest change. However, **Year 13 will still come into school on Monday 4th January, if they have a Trial exam on that day.**

Please can I ask you to be patient with us as we take on board these late announcements from government, with such limited information to work on.

Start of next Term:

Monday 4th January – additional Training Day – all students will be at home except Year 13 students who have a Trial Exam.

Year 13 Trial Exams will go ahead as planned all week.

Year 11 students will be in school from Tuesday 5th January, following the new Spring Term timetable arrangements I have already written to parents about and which can also be found on our website. Our intention is that Catch Up sessions will also run as normal.

Year 9, Year 10 and Year 12 students will remain at home in the first week of the new term, where remote learning will be provided from Tuesday 5th January. (More on remote learning later in this letter).

I am aware some Year 10, Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 students have external exams in January. Departments will be in touch with students to explain the arrangements that will be put in place to support these students prior to these exams in the first week of next term.

Vulnerable students and students of key workers:

Provision will be provided for vulnerable students and for children of key workers from Tuesday 5th January, including students with Education, Health and Care Plans and those students who are Looked After, as it was during the period of full lockdown. However, I must emphasise given the concerns of the further spread of COVID-19 following the Christmas relaxation of regulations and the disruption in school while we set up our testing arrangements, I must please ask you to only send your children to school if they cannot work safely and independently at home.

Therefore, with the proviso above, can parents inform us, using the info@whitleybayhighschool.org address, by 11am on Tuesday 22nd December, if their child will be attending school so that arrangements can be put in place.

Learning during this first week back:

As stated previously, Year 13 will take their trial exams as planned.

Year 11 will come into school, from Tuesday 5th January, and have their lessons and catch-up sessions this week, as normal.

Years 9, 10 and 12 will not come into school but will have their lessons set each day by their subject teachers. This will follow their usual daily timetable. Each morning the teachers who would teach them that day will communicate the lesson via their school email. Full instructions and information will be communicated this way. The lessons will take the form of:

Either

- Lessons which are recorded presentations, including external video links, PowerPoints and lesson tasks.

Or

- Live lessons via Microsoft teams. These will also be recorded and available on their class Team, so that students can watch them again or access them if they have missed the live versions. A reminder has been emailed to all students today on how to access a live lesson. On the remote learning page of the website, there is also a guide on how to use Microsoft Teams.

If your child has any problems accessing the work or understanding the requirements they must email their subject teacher for advice or further instructions.

Teachers will be monitoring the work completed and will be in touch with your child via e-mail and, if needed parents, if there are any concerns. The expectation will be that students will screen shot, photograph or

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attach their work to an email each day. Review and feedback lessons will be planned when students return to school.

Free School Meal Arrangements:

We are awaiting further guidance from the LA about arrangements for Free School Meals during the first week of the Spring Term. We will inform parents of these arrangements either Monday or Tuesday of next week or Monday 4th January at the latest. I am sorry I cannot be clearer about this, at this time.

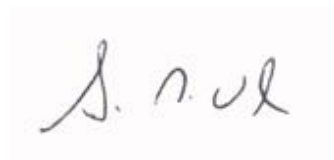
Conclusion

The announcements made by the government on Wednesday and Thursday, were entirely unexpected and have forced us to change plans at the last minute. I therefore apologise for sending this letter so late in the day, however this has regrettably been out of our hands.

I wish to reassure parents and so I will repeat what I have already said – the health and safety of students and staff is paramount. I am hopeful that by taking the additional training day to try to get our procedures and protocols in place this will ensure less days are lost due to self-isolation in the future.

I wish you and your families an enjoyable Christmas break.

Yours faithfully



STEVE WILSON
Headteacher