

Our Ref: DWt/LPu

23rd February 2021

Dear Parent/Carers,

I hope you and your families are safe and well and that you all enjoyed some time with your youngsters last week. I feel sure that you were watching the much anticipated announcing of the road map Monday evening from our Prime Minister. There is still much we don't know, but we have made some decisions to help us move forward. I must say at this early stage that there may well be some tweaks as we do not yet know exactly what we are able to do.

I know that many of you and your children will be worried about a return, especially having all return at the same time. There will also be a great many of you that will be relieved that we are finally getting somewhere. My aim is to do all I can to mitigate risk. Can I ensure that there won't be any more cases in school? No, of course I can't, no Head Teacher in the country can honestly say that. What I can say is that we will try to put measures in place that are safe and we would urge you please to remind your children that all still have to be sensible and measures are in place to keep them and our staff safe, so we can just get on with the business of teaching and learning that we have all missed so very much. All members of our school community have been fantastic so far and I see no reason for this not to continue when we are so near to the finishing line.

As you will be aware the government have asked that we test all pupils THREE times on their return. The first three tests are to be performed on school site at the Woodlands Testing Centre and we have been told that pupils will then need to test twice weekly at home moving forward. We are awaiting information on how these home test kits will be distributed.

To make the on-school testing process work we do need consent. If you have not done so already, please complete this form to ensure that we have the right permission:

[Woodlands School COVID-19 NHS Test and Trace Consent Form](#)

You **must** complete the above form even if you do not consent to your child being tested, as this ensures we have an accurate and up-to-date record for each pupil. There is an option on the form to not give consent, if this is what you wish.

From Monday 8th March

Although we could feasibly have all our youngsters back on that day, we will be unable to test all 1600 pupils at one time and logistically facilitate their following two tests in the following two week period as directed. We have been advised that it is at the school's discretion how to phase the return of pupils to accommodate testing, and so we will do so in the safest way.

Please see below how this phased return will run and how the testing programme will work:

Year 11 - Monday 8th March

We will invite our Year 11 youngsters in at a designated time to take a lateral flow test. You will receive a text from the school with a link to the SchoolCloud website, where you will be able to login and view your child's booked time. The booked time of your youngster's test will also be provided to them in their live Tutor Time meetings on Teams in the week running up to 8th March. There is no need for pupils to be in

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school uniform, once they have had the test they will go straight home. If they test negative they will be in the next day (Tuesday 9th March) attending their normal timetabled lessons and in as usual at 8.15am from hereon in.

Year 11 pupils will still receive lessons to complete on this date via Microsoft Teams, but they will not be live lessons.

Year 10 - Tuesday 9th March

All our Year 10 youngsters will be welcomed back at an allocated time to take their lateral flow test. You will receive a text from the school with a link to the SchoolCloud website, where you will be able to login and view your child's booked time. The booked time of your youngster's test will also be provided to them in their live Tutor Time meetings on Teams in the week running up to 9th March. There is no need for pupils to be in school uniform, once they have had the test they will go straight home. If negative, they will then return the next day (Wednesday 10th March) at 8.25am to full timetabled lessons.

Year 10 pupils will still receive lessons to complete on this date via Microsoft Teams, but they will not be live lessons.

Year 9 – Wednesday 10th March

We will then welcome all our Year 9 youngsters back at an allotted time to take their lateral flow test. You will receive a text from the school with a link to the SchoolCloud website, where you will be able to login and view your child's booked time. The booked time of your youngster's test will also be provided to them in their live Tutor Time meetings on Teams in the week running up to 10th March. There is no need for them to be in school uniform, once they have had the test they will go straight home. If negative, they will then return the next day (Thursday 11th March) at 8.35am to full timetabled lessons.

Year 9 pupils will still receive live lessons on 10th March via Microsoft Teams, but they are of course permitted to miss a portion of the day, due to travelling to and from school to take their lateral flow test.

Year 8 – Thursday 11th March

Penultimately we will have our Year 8 young people with us to receive their lateral flow tests at a designated time to take their lateral flow test. You will receive a text from the school with a link to the SchoolCloud website, where you will be able to login and view your child's booked time. The booked time of your youngster's test will also be provided to them in their live Tutor Time meetings on Teams in the week running up to 11th March. There is no need for them to be in school uniform, once they have had the test they will go straight home. If negative, they will then return the next day (Friday 12th March) at 8.45am to full timetabled lessons.

Year 8 pupils will still receive live lessons on 11th March via Microsoft Teams, but they are of course permitted to miss a portion of the day, due to travelling to and from school to take their lateral flow test.

Year 7 – Friday 12th March

Last, but most certainly not least we will welcome with open arms our Year 7 youngsters at an allocated time to take their lateral flow test. You will receive a text from the school with a link to the SchoolCloud website, where you will be able to view your child's booked time. The booked time of your youngster's test will also be provided to them in their live Tutor Time meetings on Teams in the week running up to 12th March. There is no need for them to be in school uniform, once they have had the test they will go straight home. If negative, they will then return on Monday 15th March at 8.05am to full timetabled lessons.

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Year 7 pupils will still receive live lessons on 12th March via Microsoft Teams, but they are of course permitted to miss a portion of the day, due to travelling to and from school to take their lateral flow test.

I believe that a slightly staggered return is the safest way we can get our pupils back to school. I feel sure that you can appreciate that testing almost 1,600 youngsters all at once was going to be a logistical impossibility and not the most common sense approach. We have been told to prioritise Years 10 and 11 and the simplest way was to have the return run from oldest to youngest, rightly or wrongly there was always going to be some more disruption to certain year groups.

Admittedly this is still very disruptive to our young people's education, however the live Teams lessons will still continue throughout this process, with the exception of Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th March. Assignments will be set on Teams for pupils to complete independently on these days as staff will be in school preparing for the return of pupils.

Key worker youngsters

Whilst all of the above is going on we will still have all our youngsters that come under this heading in school, as we have done since January. Nothing changes here apart from the classrooms we will be using. Once our youngsters here have been tested they will be able to join back in with the rest of their year group i.e. Year 11 on Tuesday March 9th to full timetabled lessons as normal.

We will be testing all pupils using the in-school provision twice on the week beginning 1st March. They will be tested on Monday, as they have been since Christmas, but also Friday to ensure no pupil goes more than seven days without being tested.

The week beginning Monday 15th March and Monday 22nd March

All our youngsters will be in school attending their normal timetabled lessons. We still have to provide two further tests to pupils. Pupils will stick with their original allocated day and time (Monday – Year 11; Tuesday – Year 10; Wednesday – Year 9; Thursday – Year 8; Friday – Year 7) although pupils will return to lessons immediately after their test, as this is asymptomatic testing and there is no reason to believe that they are infectious. Their allocated times will be shared with pupils in school and with you as parents and carers, via SchoolCloud. Results of these tests will be sent to the contact telephone number we hold on the system.

After Easter – the week beginning Monday 12th April

There will be no more testing in school. It was announced that our youngsters will have to test themselves twice a week from home. I am presuming that we will give you those lateral flow tests but am yet unsure how that will work, I am awaiting more details.

Staff testing

Staff will also be provided with two tests to use each week at home to ensure all are as safe as possible.

Further safety measures

We will be asking in line with updated government guidance for all our youngsters to wear plain face-coverings in the classrooms. This is a change that I know will not be popular with all but given how new variants spread that much more easily and quickly, it does make sense. I will not be asking teaching staff to wear face-coverings whilst teaching unless they cannot maintain social distancing. They will continue to teach from the front and put face-coverings on if they need to get closer to offer support.



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Plain face-coverings will still have to be worn inside the building where social distancing cannot be observed, but not outside. There will be no need to wear a plain face-covering where it would impact the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example P.E lessons or for those exempt from wearing a face-covering as set out in Government guidance. To simply say that you are exempt is simply not going to be the case this time as we would need something official supporting the exception so that we can all be as safe as we can possibly be, again another change.

Our youngsters will still be following the one-way system and have to wipe down their own working areas and equipment in the classrooms. We also expect them not to line up outside and go straight into the class and sit as per the seating plan.

Clubs and activities

From 8th March all before and after-school educational activities will be reinstated to support wider education and training. This will include all sports activities but no fixtures against other schools will be able to take place just yet. Lucky for the other schools as I feel sure they don't want to get back into the regular habit of losing to us anyway!

The same changing procedure will be in place for those taking P.E lessons. I am happy for our youngsters to wear P.E kit to school if they have their P.E lesson period 1 and then change at the end of that period. Also I am happy for them to wear P.E kit going home if they have P.E period 5. This just saves having to get changed twice. No one should be in P.E kit all day.

Staggered start times

Some things will be the same as our youngsters experienced from September. Namely that they will come in at staggered times the day after they have had their first test. They will go straight to the field or make use of the hard-standing areas we used as part of our winter plan; this will be weather dependent but staff will be on hand to direct. This is to get all back in the swing of things and not to create more confusion:

Year 7 – 8.05am
Year 11 – 8.15am
Year 10 – 8.25am
Year 9 – 8.35am
Year 8 – 8.45am

Timetable

All will still follow their usual timetable and there will be a slightly staggered leaving of the classrooms. Period 6 for Year 11 pupils will continue as normal.

Bubbles, break and lunch

Our youngsters will still have to be in their year group bubbles before school, break and at lunch, and we will still stagger the purchasing of food and the end of social time. All will now go back to their outside areas on the field as we are moving into spring. Always glorious in March as you know!

Track and trace

We will also be sticking with the track and trace programme we had before our early closure before Christmas. The government had initially said that we would be able to test all who were identified as close contacts of a positive case, hence reducing the need for self-isolation. They have since changed their minds on this, so we will continue as before sending any pupil home for 10 days if identified as a

close contact to a positive case. On average one positive case has eighty close contacts. I appreciate this is disruptive but there is no real way around this unless we alter the curriculum, which will have a detrimental impact on the progress of pupils.

The process of sending pupils who have been identified as a close contact home and contacting parents and carers will be the same as what was in place before Christmas.

If a youngster has to isolate as being identified as a close contact, they will still be able to access live lessons as our staff will teach the lesson live to those in the class as well as those at home all via Teams. Self-isolating pupils will still be expected to complete all of their lessons and turn in their work via Microsoft Teams, as they have done over the school's partial closure. Teachers will continue to monitor their engagement with lessons and provide them with support and feedback.

More to come

As I said at the start, there may very well be changes to our plan as we await confirmation on what we can and cannot do with regards to staggering the return and organising the testing. I will keep you informed all the way and continue to be as open and honest as I can be.

This is not a perfect situation and I know that there are still many unanswered questions. Another challenge? Yes, but our school community will rise to this as we have done the rest. For me, this is not a time to moan or complain about what we have been tasked with; we just need to get on with things and do what it takes so we can have our youngsters back with us, safe and well, so they can get on with their childhoods and we can get on with teaching them. And of course you can have your sanity back!

Incredibly kind regards to one and all,



Mr David Wright
Head Teacher