

Parent Briefing Note: 25th February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you are well and had an enjoyable and relaxing half-term break. The lighter nights, warmer weather and spring flowers are hopefully a sign of brighter times ahead. With this in mind, I am sure that you will all be aware, by now, of the Prime Minister's proposed road map for easing lockdown which includes planning for the full return of all children from 8th March 2021. At the current time, in line with government guidelines, all primary children are expected to return to school from 8th March, however, we anticipate a staggered return for our secondary pupils to enable lateral flow testing to be carried out. Each school will be contacting parents early next week to update further with contextual and school specific information and requirements.

Please find below the most notable changes to the government guidance, applicable from 8th March 2021:

Secondary aged students and staff wearing masks in the classroom

Secondary pupils and teachers must now wear masks in classrooms. The guidance also says they should be worn "during activities unless social distancing can be maintained".

However, one area where masks do not need to be worn is PE lessons, as the guidance states face masks do not need to be worn if they "would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons".

The government has informed that this measure will be in place until Easter but also states "As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point."

There are exemptions to the new requirement for pupils and staff 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
- Rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals."



Transparent face coverings, "which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip-reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate", are allowed, with the government noting that while there is limited evidence on their effectiveness, they would be better than no mask.

However, the guidance also states that face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings.

For primary schools, the guidance says it is "recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas)."

Children in primary school do not need to wear face coverings.

Attendance

School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from 8th March and the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- Parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age).
- The ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

However, pupils who are classified as extremely clinically vulnerable and, therefore, shielding are still exempt, but our schools will require a copy of the shielding letter sent to these at-risk pupils to confirm they are not required in school.

The guidance also notes that many pupils and/or families may be wary about returning due to risks to family members, but the DfE insists this not a legitimate reason not to attend.

Our staff will discuss any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures we are putting in place to reduce any risks. Please note that, in line with the guidance, pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.

Current Expectations for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Pupils

As noted above, clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are not required to attend school and can shield at home until further notice.





Schools are still required to provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school and their absence from school will not be penalised.

Curriculum expectations

The guidance states the following in respect of the curriculum and, as a Multi Academy Company we are committed to delivering the best possible education to our pupils both remotely and face to face:

"Education is not optional. All pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and equips them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

"The curriculum remains broad and ambitious. All pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment."

Formal Examinations

The guidance notes that exams will not be taking place this summer and instead pupils will receive teacher-assessed grades at key stages 4 and 5.

The above information highlights the statutory and practical aspects relating to the return of our pupils and full reopening of our schools in line with the current government guidance. What remains to be said, however, is the sheer joy that we feel, as a family of schools, to be welcoming all our young people back into our schools. We hope that our children and parents feel the same way and are equally as excited as we are.

As stated at the beginning of this letter, more specific contextual information will be forwarded to you all at some point next week by the Principal of your child's school, however, in the meantime, should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact your child's school directly.

As always, thank you for your support of and commitment to our schools and I wish you all a blessed Lent.

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Our journey with Christ

