

24th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As a Trust, we warmly welcome the Prime Minister's announcement that students can return to school from 8th March and we are really looking forward to welcoming everybody back soon.

During the last couple of months our staff have gone above and beyond to ensure that learning and support continued for all of our young people. It has been heart-warming to read all of the positive comments from parents, carers, students, and stakeholders about the high-quality provision and the hard work of staff across all of our schools. However, thanks must also go to you, as parents and carers, and to all our young people for your support and hard work throughout the toughest of times. I know it hasn't been easy trying to manage home learning on top of the other numerous challenges you may be facing right now but, thank you for all that you have done.

Hopefully though, we are starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel as the impact of the national vaccination starts to take hold and as we start to make our way through the Government's Roadmap out of the pandemic.

We are now working on our re-opening plans in line with recent Government guidance. The plans are slightly more complicated in secondary schools because we need to offer every student a Lateral Flow COVID-19 test before they start face to face lessons. Given the number of students in each year group, the restrictions we have on safe spaces and the rate at which we can process tests, it will take several days in all of our schools before we can have everybody back in our buildings for face-to-face lessons. Please bear with us during this transition. We will do all that we can to get students back into classrooms as quickly as possible.

Headteachers will write to you later this week, to share each school's precise plans for opening. It is likely we will have a phased return for year groups throughout week commencing 8th March and that we may have to suspend some streaming of 'live' lessons to give teachers time to plan for re-opening and ensure enough staff are available to supervise testing. If this happens, teachers will set tasks for students to complete independently. It is also possible that there will be some continued disruption to face to face learning during week commencing 15th March, as we complete the second and third required lateral flow tests for consenting students.

The Secretary of State for Education has asked us to remind parents that attendance in school will again become a legal requirement the day that your child officially returns to face to face teaching. We understand that some students may feel anxious and need help. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with each school if you know you will need some help. We will do all we can to support you.

On the return to school, and in line with Government guidance, students and staff will continue to wear face coverings at all times when inside communal areas of our school buildings (unless they have medical exemption).

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In addition, as of Monday 8th March, students will also be required to wear a face covering in classrooms until Easter, in the first instance.

Teaching staff have been given the option to remove their mask if they are teaching at the front of the class, outside of the 2-metre zone. If they wish to move around the classroom then teachers have been asked to ensure that they wear their mask.

For parents with children in year 10, 11 or year 13, an announcement about the assessment system for GCSE, A Level and other qualifications is likely to be made later this week. Headteachers will contact you again when we know more.

May I finish by thanking you in advance for all you will do to support this transition. Let's hope this is the last time we will have to do so!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bev Matthews', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bev Matthews
Chief Executive Officer