

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your patience in giving us time to react to the announcement on 22nd February 2021, where the Prime Minister made a statement to the House of Commons on the roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions in England. In the statement, the Prime Minister set out that, from Monday 8th March 2021, “students in all schools and further education settings can safely return to face-to-face teaching”.

Following this announcement, the Department for Education updated its guidance the key points of which are as follows:

- Secondary school and college students will take Covid-19 tests as they return to the classroom from the 8th March at existing school-based test facilities.
- Schools and colleges will have discretion on how to phase the return of their students over that week to allow them to be tested prior to their return.
- Students should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Students not undergoing testing should attend school in line with phased return arrangements.
- Secondary schools should offer students tests three to five days apart.
- After an initial programme of three tests in school/college, students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home.
- Staff in secondary schools will also be supplied with test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home.
- Testing is voluntary but strongly encouraged.

It is clear from this that rapid testing remains a vital part of the Government’s plan to suppress this virus. Part of the plan for students to return to school is for them to take a test before they return to lessons. With this in mind, Essex Local Authority have devised a plan for testing students prior to their return to on site education. This involves one of the three required tests being completed in the community, as part of the PCR Community testing provision. We have chosen to proceed with this course of action as we believe it will ultimately reduce the disruption caused by the Lateral Flow Test programme to the smooth transition of all students back to their school routines.

This approach to the testing process will involve students in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 accessing one of the PCR Community Covid 19 tests at a local testing site between the 4th and 7th March. Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 students would then return to school, and their full timetable, from Monday 8th March. This is a far more efficient return to school for these four-year groups than would be possible if proceeding with the three required Lateral Flow Tests in school. However, Students in Years 7-9 would need to continue with remote learning provision until they can obtain their community PCR test between the 11th and 14th March and will then return to lessons in school from Monday 15th March. The two community testing date windows have been determined by Essex Local Authority in order to manage the increased pressure on community testing resources. You will book your community Covid test in the usual way on the government website, selecting the community testing option. You would only be required to notify us of a positive test result. I have attached the letter from Essex Local Authority detailing this for your convenience but in summary.

Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 access a test between 4th and 7th March and return to school from 8th March. The following 2 tests will take place in school in the week beginning 8th March. Students then move to home testing.

Years 7, 8 and 9 continue with remote learning for week beginning 8th March and access a test between 11th and 14th March and return to school from 15th March. The following 2 tests will take place in school in the week beginning 15th March. Students then move to home testing.

Key Worker and Vulnerable students in Years 7, 8 and 9 can attend school the week beginning 8th March in their Key Worker bubble as usual.

School day timings

Please note that the school day will return to the times we were operating prior to moving to remote learning:

Period 1:	9.05-10	
Period 2:	10.10-11.05	
Break:	11.05-11.25	
Period 3:	11.25-12.30	
Period 4:	12.25-13.55 (split into 3 segments-including lunch)	
4a:	12.25-12.55	Y7 and Y10 lunch
4b:	12.55-13.25	Y9, Y12 and Y13 lunch
4c:	13.25-13.55	Y8 and Yr11: Lunch
Period 5:	14.05-15.00	

Start times for each Year group are as follows: -

Year 7	8:55 am
Year 8	8:55 am
Year 9	8:30 am
Year 10	8:30 am
Year 11	8:30 am
Year 12	9:00 am
Year 13	9:00 am

Many of the control measures that we put in place before this latest period of national restrictions will remain in place. However, there are some really important changes to what we are being required to do by the guidance particularly regarding face coverings. The key points are:

- All adults and students should wear a face covering at all times in all school buildings. This includes lessons in classrooms.
- All adults and students should wear a face covering, as they walk from one area of the school to another between lessons, on their way to and from their tutorial period at the start of the day, at the start and end of break and at the start and end of lunchtime.

In addition, students should wear a face covering in the following circumstances:

- If they are walking in close proximity to friends outside their 'bubble', on the way to school.
- As they use the toilet facilities and walking to and from those facilities.
- When attending the local shops, ensuring social distancing.
- When using public transport.

Students who are medically exempt from wearing face coverings have been issued with cards and these remain valid. All other students are required to wear face coverings, following government guidelines, to minimise transmission and keep all in our community safe.

Throughout this last period of national restrictions, we have received incredible support from our community, and I am incredibly proud of the resilience our young people have shown in the face of remote learning and the many challenges this has posed.

I thank you in advance for your continued support as we do everything possible to keep our school community safe during this reopening, whilst also enabling young people to have a smooth transition back into their school routines.

Kind regards

Neil Dunn

Headteacher