

31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Coronavirus (Covid-19) update for Parents/Carers**

You will have seen that the government made further announcements yesterday about the return to school in January as well as increasing Somerset to Tier 4. I thought you would welcome an update on our plans for the reopening of the school as things have changed since my last letter to you on December 18<sup>th</sup>. I had never thought that I would need to write to parents on New Year's Eve but this seems to be the way of things in this most unusual of years.

#### **Year 11 Students**

Students in Year 11 will have remote online lessons delivered via TEAMS from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January. As we went through this last term the process should be familiar to all students. Lessons will be slightly shorter in order to give them a little break from computer screens.

There are some external exams over the next two weeks in Creative I Media and Music. These will go ahead as scheduled. We will write next week with details about final revision sessions and details about exam locations, arrival times and procedures.

#### **Years 7–10**

The government have said that schools are under no obligation to offer education for the week beginning 4<sup>th</sup> January. We do not feel that this is suitable and so from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January work will be set online using Class Charts. The work will be available from Tuesday morning for students to complete across the week.

From Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January students in Years 7–10 will remain at home and will access lessons remotely using Microsoft TEAMS. The lessons will be slightly shorter to allow students to have a break from their screens. Students have all had information in school about how to access TEAMS but a reminder is attached with this letter. Inevitably, there will be some technical issues with this as we go along but the important thing will be to remain in contact with teaching staff. If there is a problem with a particular subject then students should email their class teacher directly. If, as a parent, you have a concern about the equipment needed then please contact Mr Bernard at school at [mbernard@thetauntonacademy.com](mailto:mbernard@thetauntonacademy.com).

Year 10 students will have formal external exams in Health and Social Care and PE over the first two weeks of term. These exams will continue as scheduled. We will write to those students giving details of online revision sessions, arrival procedures, location of exams and dismissal.

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All students in all years will then return to school for face-to-face teaching on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Key Worker and Vulnerable Students**

As we did back in March, the school will be ready to welcome the children of Key Workers, but it is vital that we know how many students to expect in school on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January. Included with this email is a link to an electronic form that we need you to complete by Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January at 9am. You will be asked to identify which Key Worker category you are in. Full school uniform will be expected as will the wearing of face masks around the school site.

### **Free School Meals**

As we have done in the past, we will provide those students who receive free school meals with a food hamper if required. Details will be sent out separately about this and again we would ask that this is completed promptly so that we can ensure that we can support all families who require this. Students of key workers who are in school and receive free school meals will be provided with lunch in school.

### **Testing**

Much has been made of the expectation for schools to test students and I am sure that this brings a mixture of reassurance as well as anxiety of the unknown. The intention will be to test staff and students using lateral flow devices. These apparently will provide a result within a few minutes. If a result is positive, then the person will be asked to self-isolate.

The tests are self-administered so the students will do it themselves under supervision. They are also not compulsory but clearly the more people who take the test, the greater the reassurance for all of the community. We will be sending out a consent form which we will ask you to complete next week. There is a great deal of work to be done in order to get this ready and the guidance from the government was only finalised late last night. What is clear is that we will need additional staff to help us run these testing stations in school. The offer of support from the armed forces while welcome, does not run to providing staff within schools. I am very grateful for the parents who have already contacted me to offer help and support. If you feel that you would be able to offer any time to be trained to help us run these tests, then we would love to hear from you. Please contact my Office Manager, Mrs Greenslade on [agreenslade@thetauntonacademy.com](mailto:agreenslade@thetauntonacademy.com) and we will be in touch.

### **Safety**

One of the big concerns that we all have is of course safety. We have all heard of the impact of this disease and many have experienced it either first hand or through family members. We have always taken this very seriously and have welcomed your support with this over the last few months. The intention of the staggered return to schools is to help break the transmission rates. This relies on all of us following the guidance for Tier 4 which is to make sure that we are not mixing with those not in our household. For students, who tend to feel invulnerable, this is particularly difficult as they will want to see their friends. Please make sure that they do not break the rules as this will help all of us to return to a sense of normality a little faster.

It remains vital that if a member of your household exhibits symptoms of Covid-19, that they seek medical advice and a test. While waiting for the results of that test the household should self-isolate in order to protect others they may come into contact with. No one should come into school if they have any of the symptoms. Please contact our attendance team to provide details so that we can best support and advise you.

In school, we will continue to be outside as much as possible, walk students to lessons, have hand sanitizer in all classrooms, expect students to remain in year group bubbles and to have face masks in school upon their return. This last point is really important. We issued over 1000 face masks in the last three weeks of terms because students said that they did not have one in school. This cannot continue on our return. Every student in school, who is not exempt for medical reasons, must have their own face mask. I am sure that you are providing these as parents but would ask that you reinforce this again with your children before they return to school. Together, these measures do as much as we can to ensure that safety of our community.

We will be in contact with you again during next week with further updates as we try to keep you as informed as we can in these increasingly unusual times. The coming vaccine does offer us all some hope for a more normal time ahead but it is vital that we continue to do all we can to support the national effort and protect our loved ones.

With very best wishes to you and your families for a peaceful, happy and enjoyable New Year.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Eddy', written over a vertical line that extends downwards.

Mr J Eddy  
Head Teacher

*Enclosures*

- *Guidance on accessing Microsoft TEAMS*