

26th February 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Thank you for your patience throughout uncertain times over the past days, weeks and months. Indeed, it's almost 12 months since we started to be affected as a school and community by the coronavirus pandemic but, thankfully, there does now seem to be some light at the end of the tunnel.

On Monday Boris Johnson announced that schools will be returning from 8th March – which is very welcome news for all of us. The finer details of our reopening plans are still to be 100% confirmed, but I did want to give you the main headlines before the weekend, with further details to follow early next week. Apologies in advance – even though I've tried to get it down to the bare minimum, there is a lot of information to get through.

- **We will reopen to all students in years 5 and 6 on Monday 8th March**
 - They should go to the lower school site at South Avenue, as usual, where they will be met by Mr Nisbet and the Key Stage 2 team.
 - The school buses will run as usual, and the school day begins at 8.50am and ends at 3.10pm as normal.
 - Students in years 5 and 6 do not have to wear face masks in the school grounds but will, of course, still be expected to do so on the bus.
 - Students in years 5 and 6 will not participate in the asymptomatic testing programme offered to older students.

- **We will test all students in years 7 and above who have opted in to the testing programme on Monday 8th March in their communities** [details of this programme and how to opt in are contained in a separate letter and will be sent next week]
 - Students who live in Widdrington and use the school transport will be given a test appointment at Widdrington Community Centre.
 - Students who live in Broomhill, Hadston or Red Row and use the school transport will be given a test appointment at Hadston House.
 - All other students will be given a test appointment at the upper school site on Acklington Road.
 - Students should go to their allocated centre, at their appointment time, take their test, and then return home to await the results.
 - Remote learning will be provided using Google Classroom on this day, but not all lessons will be 'live'.

- **All students in years 7 and above whose test result is negative will then return to school on Tuesday 9th March**
 - Year 7 should return to the lower school site.
 - Years 8 and above should return to the upper school site.

- **Those students in years 7 and above who have been attending school to access their remote learning under supervision can do so on Monday 8th March, before joining their peers in 'normal', face to face school lessons the following day.**

- **The physical and operational changes to the buildings that we put in place during the autumn term, especially at the upper school site, will remain in place. These changes include:**
 - zoning of the buildings for different year groups
 - separate entrances for key stages 2, 3, 4 and 5
 - teachers moving to classrooms in each year group zone to minimise the number of people moving around the buildings

- **face masks must be worn at all times inside the buildings by students in years 7 and above and this now includes in classrooms.** The only exception is that they can, of course, be removed when sitting down to eat in the dining hall. Wearing face masks in classrooms is an additional precaution brought in for the return of schools and must be adhered to, unless your child is unable to do so, due to a medical condition. If this is the case, please let us know.

- **Students should return in expected standard of uniform, as outlined clearly in letters dating back to last summer**
 - Blazers and ties do not need to be worn [we will reintroduce them for September 2021]
 - Only school branded hoodies can be worn in the buildings
 - Black polishable school shoes of a formal/dress style as per our uniform policy in previous academic years. For clarity, no trainers or footwear with clear branding will be allowed. Converse, Vans, Nike Air Force 1s etc. will not be accepted.
 - If there are any difficulties in finding the correct items of clothing, or hardship may be an issue, please get in touch with your child's Pastoral Support Officer who will be pleased to help you.

- **PE kit should be brought to school in bags and not worn instead of uniform**
 - Early in the autumn term we allowed students to wear their PE kit instead of uniform as we did not have access to changing facilities. This was resolved later in the term and we have returned to the usual system whereby uniform must be worn every day, and PE kit brought on the appropriate days.

This week also brought news about the way in which grades will be allocated to our year 11, 12 and 13 students for GCSE, A-level and vocational courses. The good news is that teachers will assess the students and award them the grades that their work in school deserves. Throughout this period of school closure I have been assuring our older students that, if they continued to engage and work to the very best of their ability, they would have nothing at all to worry about and would receive the grades they deserved. This decision confirms that, and I will share more details about the processes we will have to go through with our students in exam years next week, when there should be more guidance produced from the exam boards.

Please get in touch if you have any questions about the points raised above, or any other aspect of school life, and we are looking forward to welcoming your child back early next month.

Best wishes,



Neil Rodgers
Executive Headteacher