



Blackfen School for Girls

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

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Dear parents/carers,

The recent lockdown has meant that the school has only been open for children of critical workers and for vulnerable young people. All other young people have been working hard at home on remote learning. Following the announcement by the Prime Minister on Monday I am writing to inform you that the school will be opening once again for all students during the week beginning Monday 8 March 2021 and to say that we are very much looking forward to opening our gates to all students again this term.

The Secretary of State has written to all leaders in schools to outline how the Covid response plan should be interpreted by schools.

Covid response paragraph 87

Pupils and students in all schools and Further Education settings will return to face-to-face education from 8 March.

The Secretary of State writes:

*All schools, colleges and further education settings should allow full attendance from 8 March. School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils, with secondary schools and colleges able to **phase** return over the week of 8 March to allow students to be offered testing on return.*

I will be writing to all parents/carers to specify the exact dates and times of the return to face-to-face school for your daughter/son. These may, as the guidance above suggests, be staggered across the week beginning 8 March 2021.

Covid response paragraph 91

The successful return of more learners to face-to-face education and childcare settings will be supported by a range of new measures, designed to minimise the spread of COVID-19. The Government applauds the huge efforts made by pupils and students, early years practitioners, teachers, lecturers and support staff to implement protective measures. The risk of transmission will be reduced by implementing the system of controls endorsed by PHE which the Department for Education will work with schools to implement. In addition to the already established rapid testing regime and regular testing of staff, there will be twice-weekly testing of secondary school and college pupils, initially with on-site testing and then home testing. All households with school children, members of their support and childcare bubbles, and those in related occupations will also be encouraged to get tested regularly.



The Secretary of State writes:

Rapid testing

Since January, education leaders across schools, colleges and universities have been involved in a fantastic national effort to test their staff and students. Over 4 million tests have already been completed under your collective leadership and I would like to thank you for all the work you have done to set up the programme so far.

Rapid testing will continue to remain a vital part of the Government's plan to suppress this virus, in education and childcare settings and across society. This sort of testing means that asymptomatic people who might otherwise continue to attend educational settings are identified and self-isolate.

Twice-weekly asymptomatic testing is already available for secondary school, most college, primary school, special school, special post-16, school-based nursery and maintained nursery school workforce, including support staff such as teaching assistants and those supporting with wraparound childcare. Secondary schools and colleges have also been able to offer testing on return for their students, and we are now asking those leaders to put this in place for all students across the week of the 8 March as they return.

Today, we have also announced the further expansion of this asymptomatic testing programme to include offering regular twice weekly testing of secondary school and college students at home and home based testing for secondary staff.

It is vitally important that all young people are tested as we return to full time face-to-face education for all students. The lateral flow test is a very simple test and this is administered by a trained workforce of processors and test assistants. With this letter there is a letter regarding testing which seeks your consent for your daughter to be tested. **Students in years 12 and 13 do not need to provide their consent.** For the safety of all members of the school community I cannot stress strongly enough how we need every member of the community to engage with this. This supports us, our families and other people in making sure that positive cases are identified and transmission is therefore limited. I will be writing with further details about testing in school and how this will be conducted at home during this term.

Covid response paragraph 92

The Government also recommends that the use of face coverings in Higher Education, Further Education and secondary schools is extended for a limited period to all indoor environments – including classrooms – unless 2m social distancing can be maintained. Face coverings are now also recommended in early years and primary schools for staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible, for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas.

The Secretary of State writes:

In addition to the system of controls, where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and pupils where social distancing cannot easily be maintained when moving around the premises outside of classrooms or

teaching spaces, such as in corridors and communal areas. In the same settings for a limited period, we recommend the use of face coverings in classrooms and other teaching spaces, unless wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons, or for those who are exempt from wearing a face covering as set out in Government guidance.

Once again, I urge you to work with us on making sure your daughter/son are provided with at least one face covering to use every single day. This does protect them but importantly it also protects other members of the community. No member of staff should be asking a student to wear a face covering. It should now be automatic that all members of the community wear a covering at all times with very few exceptions. Those who are exempt should wear the lanyard provided for them at all times.

Provision of remote learning continues until your daughter/son returns to face-to-face education in school. From Monday 1st March, teachers will be preparing for the switch from remote learning to face-to-face learning. From Monday 1st March, provision of live remote learning will be replaced by independent study which will continue to be monitored and assessed. Teachers will inform their classes, accordingly.

Finally, I know that students in years 11,12 and 13 are anxious to hear about what will be replacing examination grades this summer. We have been told that this information will be outlined to us on Thursday this week. Once we know more, we will write to you.

I would like to thank you for your continued work and support for all the work which we do at Blackfen. I will be writing again in due course, once we have finalised our plans for the return of all students to face-to-face learning.

To summarise:

Face-to-face education will start again for all students from week beginning Monday 8 March 2021. Exact dates and times will be notified to you.

Face coverings are mandatory for all members of the community at all times on school site, apart from when eating and some physical activities.

It is expected that all students and staff will be tested regularly starting with on site testing to begin with. Please complete the consent form as soon as possible.

All students will be expected to follow all one-way systems and other directions to ensure the safety of all on school site.

With my best wishes to you and to your family at this time.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Brown
Head Teacher