

31 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### Start of term arrangements

I suspect that many of us have had a rather unusual festive break this year and it looks as though the start of 2021 is going to continue with the disruption that we have frustratingly become used to. That said, I do hope that you have had a lovely, if not brief, time with your families and made the most of it.

It appears to becoming a habit for those making the important decisions that affect us all to be leaving them until the last minute and the Secretary of State for Education has, again, followed suit. We really share your frustration and will endeavour, as always with your support, to do the best we can in these trying times.

Following the announcement yesterday, I would like to confirm the details for the start of the new term:

- We will continue with the Lateral Flow Testing, as planned, on 4, 5 and 6 January. Whilst the original intention was to remove asymptomatic cases from the school population before the students returned, it will now serve to help and inform families with an identified case and help them take further measures to reduce any chance of community transmission. There is an expectation that all secondary schools will be able, in the coming weeks, to have the set up to regularly test students and staff. So, our plans will also serve, as intended, to pilot this and see how we can improve our processes.
- Apart from those attending for their allotted Lateral Flow Test time, the academy will only be open in the first week 4-8 January for those students who have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP), or who have a social worker supporting their family or who are children of key workers. Key workers who want their child to come to school, please email [childcare@furnessacademy.co.uk](mailto:childcare@furnessacademy.co.uk) so that we know how many to expect. Those who have an EHCP or a social worker are expected to return, as normal, on Monday 4 January. All other students will receive their school work through Microsoft Teams. Students will not need to wear their school uniform during this week.
- The external BTEC examinations scheduled on Thursday and Friday will continue, as planned, and students who are entered for these need to attend for their examination. We will be in contact with all of those that are entered.
- **From Monday 11 January, all Year 11 students are expected to return to school** and all other years are to remain at home and will receive their school work through Microsoft Teams. Year 11 will be expected to wear their school uniform as usual.
- **From Monday 18 January, Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students are expected to return to school as normal.**

### Lateral Flow Testing

This will proceed, as planned, and all students who have consented should have received an appointment time via a letter. If you did not receive one and have given consent, please email [masstesting@furnessacademy.co.uk](mailto:masstesting@furnessacademy.co.uk).

It is disappointing that, despite all the effort gone into us being set up to test over 94% of our school before students returned, we have now been instructed to remain closed to the vast majority of our students until Monday 18 January. Whilst, like you, I understand the national directive, due to the identified new strain which is more highly transmissible, it is nonetheless frustrating. I have asked whether it was possible to delay the testing until the following week, but unfortunately the organisation and deployment of people and resources, coordinated by the Local Authority, will not be available.

Further to the information I shared before the Christmas break about the Lateral Flow Testing, there has been an update from the Department for Health. Any Year 7 student under 12 years old by the time they take the test, must have their parent or carer with them to help administer the test swab. If this is an issue for any parents, or you have any other questions about the Lateral Flow Testing, please email them to [masstesting@furnessacademy.co.uk](mailto:masstesting@furnessacademy.co.uk). Additionally, any student who has tested positive to COVID-19 within the last 90 days will not need to do a test.

When students attend to do their test, they are to come into the main car park and make their way to the Community Entrance. Here, they will be met by a member of staff and instructions will be given about what to do next. We have posted on our Facebook page a short video of the testing set up in school. If you are interested in how this will work, please take a look.

We appreciate that this late notice from the Department for Education and the government puts additional strain and pressure on families. Please do contact us if there is a problem and we will try and help where possible.

I am hopeful that there will not be any further announcements made that affect the start of the new term, but if there are I will write to you again.

Thank you, in advance, for your support and patience. It is gratefully appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Simon Laheney  
**Headteacher & Chief Executive Officer**