

24 February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Wider reopening of school to students from Monday 8 March 2021

I am sure that you will be as relieved as we are that schools have been given the green light to welcome students back from Monday 8 March and that extra-curricular activities and sports will be able to resume alongside the academic curriculum.

The Department for Education has published its updated guidance and whilst it is 66 pages long, much of it reflects what we were doing previously with our system of controls in regard to personal hygiene, enhanced cleaning, good ventilation and maintaining social distancing where possible. As such, when students return it will be the same as it was when we returned in September. The teaching arrangements in the 'bubbles' with separate entrances will remain, along with the lunchtime arrangements that they are all now familiar with. School uniform expectations will continue as usual with the exception of wearing of PE kit instead of the school uniform on the day they have a PE lesson.

There are two key changes that affect everyone:

- The first, is the extended use of face coverings which now must be worn in classrooms up until the Easter break. This, in effect, means that everyone must wear a face covering at all times whilst they are in the school building, unless they are medically exempt, eating their lunch or during exercise in PE lessons.

We understand this will be frustrating for some and are relieved that this is only required up until the Easter break and, as such, only 19 days. It is an additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high COVID-19 prevalence in the community and we know we will all do our best to adhere to it.

- The second key change is the requirement for regular asymptomatic testing of students and staff.

As you will be aware, using the Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) we successfully tested over a 1,000 students, staff and some parents over 3 days in early January 2021. Since then, staff and students who have attended Furness Academy during the national lockdown have been tested weekly. All in all, our staff team of LFT administrators are now highly efficient with the process and are now supporting the community testing programme which began yesterday, 23 February. It is fair to say they have been brilliant and we are all in good hands!

In order to test the whole school community safely from Monday 8 March, we will need to stagger the return to school for the students and we hope the test process will only take two days in total.

Our outline plan is as follows and more specific details for each year group, including times, will be communicated next week.

| Year Group | Plan |
|----------------|---|
| Year 11 | On Monday 8 March, students will be invited in by tutor group from 08:40 for a test. Following a negative test result, students will return to their tutor room and face to face lessons will start with period 3 at 11:00. |
| Year 10 | On Monday 8 March, students will be invited in by tutor group from 11:00 for a test. Following a negative test result, students will return to their tutor room and face to face lessons will start with period 5 at 13:30. |
| Year 9 | For the morning of Monday 8 March, students will continue with their remote lessons following their normal school timetable and times (not the shortened version) for periods 1-4. They will then be invited in by tutor group from 13:00 for a test and will return home following their test. They will return to school as normal from 08:40 on Tuesday 9 March. |
| Year 8 | On Monday 8 March, students will continue with their remote learning following their normal school timetable and times (not the shortened version) and will be invited in on Tuesday 9 March by tutor group from 12:45 for a test. Following the test, students will go home and return to school on Wednesday 10 March at 08:40. |
| Year 7 | On Monday 8 March, students will continue with their remote learning following their normal school timetable and times (not the shortened version) and will be invited in on Tuesday 9 March by tutor group from 08:30 for a test. Following a negative test result, students will return to their tutor room and face to face lessons will start from period 3 at 11:00. |

Thank you, in advance, for your patience and support with this and we are confident that two days is enough to do this and that everyone will be back in school together from Wednesday 10 March. If you have not given consent for your child to be tested, Mrs Robinson (Deputy Headteacher) will be in contact to see if this is still the case. If you have already completed a consent form, then there is no need to do this again.

Whilst there have been some doubts cast over the accuracy of the LFTs, those that have tested positive with us have all then had a follow-up Polymerase Chain Reaction Test (PCR) which has confirmed the result. I recognise that these tests do sometimes give a negative result with asymptomatic cases with a low viral load and we are none the wiser, but if it tests positive with the LFT then the individual almost certainly has COVID-19.

For those of you who have children who are under 12 years old, there is no longer a requirement for the parent to administer the test. Instead, it can be administered, if necessary, by a trained adult. Parents can still accompany their child if they wish to do so.

Whilst we are delighted for the return of our students, we are deeply conscious of the need to maintain the highest levels of biosecurity at this time. All students will receive a further two tests in school during the first two weeks and then will be provided with their own home testing kits. Further information about this will follow in due course.

It is an enormous relief to be able to write this letter and I look forward to the prospect of everyone returning to school.

Yours faithfully



Simon Laheney
Headteacher & Chief Executive Officer