

31st December 2020

Dear Parent and Carer

Firstly, I do hope that you and your family have been able to enjoy the Christmas Holidays. I know that many plans had to be changed and I am also aware that some much anticipated trips to see family members were unable to go ahead. However, I do hope this did not detract too much from the festivities.

If you have been following the news this week, you will not be surprised to be receiving a letter about a change of plan for the start of the Spring Term 2021. Yesterday the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, confirmed the following in a statement to the House of Commons:

- **Years 11 and 13** will not return to school until **Monday 11th January**. This is one week later than had been planned.
- **All other year groups** are expected to return in the week beginning **Monday 18th January**. This is also one week later than had been planned.
- **Vulnerable Students** and the **children of Critical Workers** are able to return from **Monday 4th January**. Thank you to our parents/carers who have already completed the Google Form sent at the end of last term letting us know if your child needed this supervision from Monday 4th January. Plans have been made for these students. Please note that any students attending school are required to wear uniform and arrive at the main playground outside the DT block at their usual arrival time. Next week we will collect the information about who requires supervision in the week beginning Monday 11th January.

The reason for this national delay in the full return to school is to enable schools more time to prepare for the mass testing programme that it is hoped all students and staff will choose to be a part of. The tests have not yet arrived and we are expecting them on Monday 4th January. Training needs to take place for the staff conducting the tests and the logistics of arranging up to 1750 tests (taken twice by everyone) also needs careful planning. You will receive further information about the testing process including information about the consent that is required in due course.

We are hopeful that we will be able to do both the initial test and the repeat test for Years 11 and 13 between Monday 11th and Friday 15th January. Depending on our experience of conducting these tests, it may be possible that the return for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will need to be phased during the week beginning 18th January. I will write to you nearer the time when the logistics of this have become clearer.

In the meantime, the start of the term will see all the students return to 'online' learning. Those students in need of supervision who are booked in to return on the 4th January will be supervised, completing the same work as their classmates. Although the government has said that work in the first week only needs to be set for Years 11 and 13, we have made plans to set this for all students and keep them busy and ready for their proper return. On Monday 4th January, Mr Cavill will send a letter outlining the expected work schedule for each year group.

The Secretary of State also indicated that the external assessments being taken by vocational students in the 6th Form in January will still go ahead as planned. We are keen that this does not adversely affect our Year 12 students and we will be making arrangements for these students to have some revision sessions in the weeks beginning Monday 4th and Monday 11th January. Mr Henman is liaising with the Subject Leaders of BTEC Sport, Health and Social Care, Business, Cambridge Technical IT and Art & Design, to agree a plan for which days/sessions these students will be able to come in. He will write separately to these students and this information will also be shared by the students' teachers via Google Classrooms.

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During the initial weeks of term, our canteen will be offering a reduced service to those students who are in school. If there are any students who are eligible for free school meals but are not going to be in school, there is still the opportunity to order a sandwich/baguette at lunchtime. This would need to be collected between 11am and 1pm from the window of the main canteen. To order a sandwich, please use the following Google Form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd_iiQ_V_oHkwOgRNvxRbk3BQHcNe303QCaQCdQiCa8At2wlg/viewform.

I am sorry for any inconvenience this delay to a proper return may cause you and your families. The government has said they will continue to review the situation and let us all hope that the spread of the new variant of COVID slows down in the coming weeks. The move of Dorset into 'Tier 3' does, of course, mean greater restrictions on us all. The roll out of vaccinations does at least give us something to be optimistic about.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year. Let us hope that 2021 brings us better news on the horizon and that in twelve months time we can look back at things to celebrate.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert