



From the Principal

25 February 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Return to onsite learning – phased across the week commencing Monday 8th March 2021

Further to my brief message on 23 February, I am now in a position to share greater detail with you about our plans to welcome children back to onsite learning during the week commencing Monday 08 March 2021. Most pupils and students have been learning and supported remotely since the start of January as a result of national lockdown.

You may be interested to engage with the considerably detailed [national guidance available here](#). I shall highlight the main points of awareness and summary information that you need to know, through this communication.

Rapid Covid-19 lateral flow tests – asymptomatic testing

We have established an area of our School as a testing facility to advise and supervise the self-administration of rapid lateral flow tests, by pupils and students. We have also recruited staff members who we have trained in the use of lateral flow devices. Lateral flow devices help to identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms – and generate a result within 30 minutes.

Testing is voluntary but strongly encouraged. We will offer your child 3 tests, 3 to 5 days apart, starting with the schedule outlined below in this communication. Pupils and students will return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result, alongside those whose parents/ carers opt for them not to take tests.

Individuals with a positive lateral flow device test result will need to self-isolate in line with the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection. Those with a negative lateral flow device test result can continue to attend school unless they have individually been advised otherwise by NHS Test and Trace or Public Health professionals (for example as a close contact).

People receiving negative test outcomes must still follow carefully other precautionary health protection measures, such as hands-face-space.

Please find attached policies, details, and explanations - including an explanation of 'how to do your test' from NHS Test and Trace. [For your child to undertake rapid lateral flow testing, we will require your parental/ carer consent and would ask that you submit this via the online form accessed by this link.](#)

Covid-19 - home testing

Once pupils have been tested 3 times at school, they will be provided with home test kits for regular testing twice weekly. It is anticipated that the tests undertaken here onsite at school under guidance and supervision will build our children's confidence and accuracy in self-administering the swabs at home. The kits once distributed to you will contain full details for your additional parental reference and support.

Staff, pupils, and students must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Staff and pupils should also share their result, whether void, positive or negative, with their school to help with contact tracing – and we shall outline our processes for this at a closer time.

Staff, students, or pupils with a positive lateral flow device test result will need to self-isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. They will also need to arrange a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result if the test was done at home. Those with a negative lateral flow device test result can continue to attend school and use protective measures. A PCR test is not necessary if a positive lateral flow device outcome is determined from the onsite School test centre.

Schedule for the phased return to School

We will be staggering the testing and return to school process as outlined below:

	Mon 08 March	Tues 09 March	Wed 10 March	Thurs 11 March	Fri 12 March
Year 13	Test then home	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 12	Remote learning	Test then home	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 11	Test then home	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 10	Remote learning	Test then home	Normal lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 9	Remote learning	Remote learning	Test then attend lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 8	Remote learning	Remote learning	Test then attend lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons
Year 7	Remote learning	Remote learning	Test then attend lessons	Normal lessons	Normal lessons

On the days where year groups are invited on site for their first lateral flow device test, we will allocate a timetabled appointment - where you have expressed permission for these to be undertaken. These time-slots for your child will be confirmed to you over the coming days by separate email, alongside instructions for arriving at the school site – so please watch out for this. We are taking this phased approach in order to minimise mixing and maintain social distancing whilst here onsite.

Where children return home, or remain at home, in line with the schedule above, teachers will still provide online learning – although for the period 04-09 March inclusive lessons will be uploaded asynchronous content rather than live-streamed in real time. This is so that we can retain staffing capacity in school to support, induct, and manage pupils and students with lateral flow testing processes.

Normal lessons (where indicated in the schedule above) means onsite attendance and arrival at School at the times established throughout the September to December 2020 period – that is to say, arrival at 09:15 for pupils in years 7, 8, and 9 in their respective year group bubble line-up area outside the School; and arrival at 09:30 for pupils in years 10 and 11 and students in years 12 and 13, again in the respective line-up area external to the School so that we can continue to contain mixing.

Children of critical workers, those in receipt of an EHCP (SEND) or in vulnerable circumstances

To support the School with the management of wider-reopening processes, we would request if at all possible that parents/ carers of children we have routinely made provision for onsite since January are supported with learning at home on Monday 08 and Tuesday 09 March – unless they are in year 11

or year 13 (for the Tuesday 09 March where those cohorts will return). This will help us with staffing commitments and allocations overall.

We do however realise that for some parents/ carers who are critical workers the request above may be problematic – and if you cannot sort an alternative plan for those days we will continue to accommodate your child onsite. If your child is currently eligible for onsite attendance and you would like that provision on the 08 or 09 March, I ask that you email Anna Cosimetti here at the school: a.cosimetti@uobschool.org.uk

Lunch arrangements

Lunch facilities and food provision will be available to all pupils and students from and including Wednesday 10 March 2021. Pupils in year 11 and students in year 13 attending School for learning on Tuesday 09 March 2021 are asked to be provided with a packed lunch by parents/ carers for that day.

Our families eligible for free school meals, will be provided with supermarket vouchers for the Monday 08 and Tuesday 09 March, in line with the procedures now embedded at the School for supplying those.

Maintaining a Covid-secure environment at School

The arrangements being put in place for asymptomatic testing enhance, and do not replace, the good health and safety practices, routines, systems, and structures we have put in place throughout various stages of responding to the pandemic to date.

We shall therefore continue to promote a Covid-secure environment with shared responsibility as a School community, and of course our pupils and students are central to those expectations.

We shall therefore continue to emphasise and promote:

- a. Hand hygiene.
- b. Year group bubbles.
- c. Minimised class mixing within bubbles.
- d. Distancing where possible (teachers remaining 2m from pupils in classrooms).
- e. Screens in work bases.
- f. Additional ventilation – including natural ventilation in all learning and work spaces.
- g. Regular and enhanced cleaning of the site and surfaces.

Face coverings

The Department for Education has revised its guidance on the wearing of face coverings in secondary schools. When Birmingham previously became a City with increased cases of coronavirus, it was required for pupils, students, and staff to wear face coverings in shared and communal spaces within the building. That will still be in place upon the March return, and in addition we shall ask pupils and students to wear face coverings in class and learning spaces.

Public Health England has recommended this additional measure at this time, and will be in place until the Easter break in the first instance – subject thereafter to national review. We realise that some people, including some of our pupils and students are exempt from wearing a face covering.

We also realise that where coverings are worn, it is important that this is done correctly in order to be effective – including that they are put on and removed safely. We shall as a part of the return to school remind pupils and students of these steps and guidance. It will therefore be important, as it was also previously, for your child to have with them a plain, purposeful face covering as a part of their daily kit and equipment.

[Please click here if you wish read further details about face coverings.](#)

Processes the School will follow when a person is Covid-positive

If a pupil, student, or staff member is confirmed as Covid-positive, we shall as was the case throughout September to December 2020 identify close contacts – and in conjunction with advice from our local health protection teams I shall instruct periods of self-isolation away from school.

Parents and carers are reminded of the email channel established by the School for Covid-19 status reporting, including PCR test-outcomes: covid@uobschool.org.uk

Standards and expectations

We have been so very impressed by the way in which our children have, and continue to confront and rise to the many challenges of this time – being away from friends, routines, and learning in a traditional sense. Almost all of our pupils and students showed determination, consideration, and maturity during our autumn term return to onsite learning ahead of the current lockdown period. They demonstrated doing the right thing, for the right time, for the right reason.

When we return from March 8th we shall take time to remind pupils and students of our standards and expectations and the importance of demonstrating good character virtues. We shall stress the importance and benefits that underpin our code of conduct – including the additional expectations and shared community purpose in upholding a Covid-secure environment for all.

We shall expect all pupils and students to return to School in accordance with our uniform and dress codes – and if this is likely to present any difficulties for families at this time I would ask that you make contact with your child's Pastoral Manager or Mrs Walker: g.walker@uobschool.org.uk so that we may be aware of circumstances and provide support where possible.

Clinically extremely vulnerable children

We recognise that many of our pupils and students have individual health conditions and vulnerabilities. Public Health England has revised their guidance and categorisation of people considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable – including those in receipt of a letter from their GP advising shielding. If you are aware that, or are concerned about your child's vulnerabilities, please feel free to make contact with us so that we can work with you to offer support and guidance – and where necessary put in place individual risk assessments and control measures to build reassurance and additional protection.

Children in receipt of an individual risk assessment already will have their circumstances reviewed automatically at this time by our SEND team. If you would like to contact us in relation to this please email: a.reeves@uobschool.org.uk

Pupils in year 11 (GCSEs) and students in year 13 (A levels)

Our young people in GCSE and A level cohorts for this year will be eagerly awaiting further guidance about assessment and grading processes. You will probably be aware that Ofqual (the Examinations Regulator) has today offered initial guidance about steps ahead – although there is much detail still to be determined. I remain heartened that there is a strong emphasis at this extraordinary time in supporting each pupil and student on to a successful next step. For information, I signpost you to the information available through the links below:

[How qualifications will be awarded 2021.](#)

[Decisions on how GCSE, AS and A level grades will be determined in summer 2021.](#)

- There will be some summer assessments that will form part of the grading process
- We will work to ensure that these are fair, rigorous, and accurate
- We'll let you know when assessments will be as soon as we have mapped a timeline

Importantly, and all being well, we have more teaching time and assessment time ahead from March 8th, and there is still a good amount of time to have control over outcomes that lie ahead. As we have emphasised throughout, we encourage pupils and students, including our examination cohorts, to continue to engage as fully as possible with learning – online and onsite. We shall liaise further with you over coming days and weeks with details.

Monday 15 March 2021

Please cross-check your diaries and calendars. Monday 15 March was previously published as a no-pupil day for staff development. This day is now to be a teaching day – and will need to be a day in place for some lateral flow testing for some cohorts.

We may need to notify you of an alternative no-pupil day for the summer term, so that teachers and staff can instead take time during the summer term ahead to work in teams for standardising GCSE and A level grading and awards.

The published term dates for the school years 2021/22 and 2022/23 are currently being finalised and approved by Governors, and will be ready for publication on our website from next week.

Your opportunity to submit queries

Thank you for your attention to the considerable amount of information in this communication – and for submitting the online permission in relation to asymptomatic lateral flow testing via the link, stated again [here](#).

We will be providing additional information across coming days. However, in the meantime, if you have any particular queries you wish to raise, please contact Anna Cosimetti: a.cosimetti@uobschool.org.uk and we shall get back to you as soon as we can.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Townsend
Principal