

31 December 2020

Dear parent(s)/carer(s),

I hope that you have been able to enjoy some time with your family over the Christmas period and that you have all remained safe and well.

As we prepare to return to school, I need to make you aware of the changes to the government guidance in relation to secondary schools which were updated on Wednesday 30th December. Although there are many details still to be clarified, I can confirm the following arrangements for you to be aware of:

Monday January 4th

- Monday remains an INSET Day, as previously planned. School will be closed to all students, and there will not be any remote learning provision.

Tuesday 5th to Friday 8th January:

- School will now only be open only to identified vulnerable students and the children of essential workers whose parents have requested that they attend on those days. Any additional requests including those for Year 11 students now, need to be made by 5pm on Sunday (3 January) to enable us to staff groups appropriately.

Please use the email: schoolclosure@merrillacademy.derby.sch.uk and include the following information if you are an essential worker:

Child/s name:

Year group:

Parent/Carer name:

Parent Carer job title:

Parent/Carer Employer details:

Parent/Carer phone number:

Parent/Carer email address:

Places will be for the full week

- These students will also be offered access in school to lateral flow testing for COVID-19. Further information about this will follow.
- All other students, including those in Year 11 who were expecting to attend school under the government's original plan, will be provided with a programme of remote learning, details of which will follow in a pack with other important information shortly.

Monday 11th to Friday 15th January:

- Year 11 students will return to full time attendance at school, following the same school day that has been in operation since September. These students will all be offered access in school to lateral flow testing for COVID-19. Further information about this will follow.

- Vulnerable students and the children of essential workers whose parents have requested that they attend, will continue to be offered face to face learning in school every day.
- All other students will continue to be provided with a programme of remote learning.
- Year 10 and 11 students who have scheduled public examinations will be expected to attend them.

Monday 18th January:

- All remaining year groups will return to full time face to face learning in school, and will be offered access to lateral flow testing for COVID-19.
- From this point forward, if the school receives notification that a student or member of staff has received a lab-confirmed positive test for COVID-19, identified close contacts will be offered a week of daily testing as an alternative to self-isolation. It is hoped that this will reduce the ongoing disruption to learning experienced by students who in some cases have already been required to spend several periods of time self-isolating from school.
- We will send a further communication next week regarding the Year 11 planned mock examinations.

Remote learning

A blended offer of live, web-based and resource based lessons will be provided for all students from **Tuesday 5th January**. Your child will need access to MS Teams and the internet. Students in all year groups will follow a timetable which will be shared with them on Monday, and will be very similar to their usual one. Attendance to these lessons is compulsory and will include a Period 1 Tutor Time which is essential for safe and well-being checks. If your child doesn't have access to a device or the internet to access lessons and Tutor Time, please contact your child's Head of Year as soon as possible.

I will be in touch again early next week with further details, particularly in respect of the arrangements for testing and the consents which will be required for those students who will be taking part. Updated guidance from the Department for Education continues to be provided on a daily basis.

I hope that this has been a helpful update on the changes to our start of term arrangements. We are all extremely mindful of the lost learning time students have already faced and the challenges of home education. However, we must continue to follow the government guidance and do everything possible to keep our school community safe.

I very much hope that 2021 will see the end of the measures that we have been forced to put in place and that we can all return to our normal lives as soon as is possible.

Wishing you a Happy New Year and prosperous 2021.

Yours faithfully



Ms J Harlow
Headteacher