



29 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Update COVID-19

I am writing to give you an update on our response to the announcements made by the Government and the Department for Education (DfE) as we closed for the end of the autumn term. There have been several further announcements made over the period of the Christmas break and I appreciate there have been several reports in the national media and this can create a confusing picture. I want to take this opportunity to clarify as much as possible, my understanding of actions to be taken as we reopen from January 2021. The DfE have issued several documents on their website which I have taken extracts from to help make sense of what we have been informed of so far:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges>

I wish to stress that it may be possible that after sending this letter, the Government publish further information which may mean changes to what I have written here.

There are two key aspects linked to reopening in January 2021:

1. The implementation of a staggered start to the term
2. The implementation of in-school testing

The implementation of a staggered start to the term

- School will be closed to pupils on Monday 4 January 2021 to allow us to implement arrangements for in-school testing
- From Tuesday 5 January 2021, pupils in examination Years 11 and 13 will return to school as usual following the timetable we established for the full reopening from September 2020 i.e. Year 11 8.30am to 3.10pm and Year 13 8.25am to 2.45pm
- From Tuesday 5 January 2021, pupils identified as vulnerable and children of key workers are to return to school in accordance with the strict COVID-19 Secure measures we have had in place since the start of term in September 2020 i.e. pupils to remain in their Year Group Bubble and follow the timetable and protocols as established last term
- From Tuesday 5 January 2021, for those pupils in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12, work will be set on Microsoft Teams. Where possible, live lessons will be in place from Tuesday 5 January 2021. We are aware that some pupils may not be able to access Microsoft Teams and we will therefore produce packs of work on Monday 4 January 2021 for distribution from Tuesday 5 January 2021
- On Monday 4 January 2021, we will continue to support families with children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and purchase supermarket vouchers to be distributed Tuesday 5 January 2021. As previously, we ask that any family who is not yet in receipt of FSM but who find themselves in difficult circumstances, contact school on enquiries@titussaltschool.co.uk so we can provide support
- On Monday 4 January 2021, we will issue letters and guidance for in-school testing
- From Monday 11 January 2021, all pupils are to return to school and follow the timetable and protocols as established last term

The following is an extract from the document included in the first weblink listed above:

Schools with secondary-age pupils

Schools with secondary-age pupils are encouraged to prepare for a phased start back to planned on-site provision in the first week of term to allow for these pupils to be tested ahead of normal schooling resuming.

This should involve:

- full-time on-site provision from the first day of term for all vulnerable children, the children of critical workers and pupils in exam year groups (primarily years 11 and 13)
- as many secondary-age pupils and staff as possible being offered 2 lateral flow device tests, starting in the week commencing 4 January, prioritising staff, vulnerable children, the children of critical workers and pupils in years 11 and 13
- remote education being provided for all other pupils when they are at home, and in line with [local tier restrictions](#)
- all pupils back in school for face-to-face education on 11 January

Pupils prioritised for on-site provision should be kept in consistent bubbles in the week commencing 4 January whilst they await test results. Outside of school, they should continue to adhere to [local tier restrictions](#).

All specialist settings and alternative provision schools or settings should plan for full-time on-site provision for all pupils from the start of term. Those with secondary-age children are encouraged to take up the offer to test their pupils.

Vulnerable children and young people include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
 - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
 - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
 - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
 - those living in temporary accommodation
 - those who are young carers
 - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example, due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
 - care leavers
 - other children and young people at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Schools choosing not to take up this offer of asymptomatic testing should provide on-site provision for vulnerable children, the children of critical workers and pupils in years 11 and 13 in the week commencing 4 January and provide remote education for all other pupils. Full on-site provision should recommence on 11 January.

All schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the [system of controls](#) set out in the actions for schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. These measures provide a framework for school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for pupils and staff. If schools follow the guidance and maximise control measures, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

Further information on critical (key) workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings is available on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

The implementation of in-school testing

- As I wrote on 17 December 2020, we have already started planning for implementing the lateral flow testing of pupils and members of staff in school
- We have a former doctor who has trained as a teacher and a nurse who has already had experience of mass testing for COVID-19 who will be joining us at the start of term
- On Monday 4 January 2021 we will issue the permission letters (see the second weblink on page one of this letter); we will organise the COVID-19 Secure testing facility in school and complete the training programme as outlined in the guidance documentation issued to schools
- On Tuesday 5 January 2021 we will begin the in-school testing programme for members of staff; pupils in Years 11 and 13; pupils identified as vulnerable and children of key workers in all other year groups once permission has been received
- From Monday 11 January 2021, in accordance with DfE and Public Health England (PHE) guidance, we will begin the in-school testing programme for all pupils for whom permission has been received

Reports of a New Variant

I am aware that the reports of a "New Variant" to COVID-19 is reported as having impact in a different way to the first Coronavirus COVID-19. Below is an extract from information Duncan Cooper, Consultant in Public Health working for Bradford Council, provided to the Deputy Director of children's Services, Bradford:

New variant

Public Health England have confirmed that the new variant has been detected in largest numbers in the South East of the Country, but also further North as far as the East Midlands. The initial analysis from laboratories suggests it may be 70% more transmissible than the main existing strain of COVID-19 (known as wild-type SARS-COV-2).

There are no clear signals of a rapid growth in infections outside of the South East, which has seen a sharp upsurge in infection over the last few weeks. However, as we have seen with COVID-19 numbers can increase very quickly if we relax social distancing measures.

Public Health England (PHE) have told us that the existing COVID tests (PCR and LFT) seem to be effective in detecting the new COVID-19 variant. Also we have no reason to believe that the COVID vaccine will not be effective against this strain.

Response

At the moment, we simply don't know how much of the variant may be circulating in Bradford or Yorkshire. It is understandable that staff or families may ask you questions but in terms of public action, we need people to continue to follow public health advice.

The best form of protection against all forms of the COVID-19 virus is adherence to social distancing, minimising social mixing over the Christmas break, self-isolating if people have COVID-19 symptoms and getting tested via National Test and Trace. In Public Health we will also be stepping up our surveillance for any early signs of an upsurge in infections locally, so we can act quickly if this does occur.

I have included this extract in an attempt to reassure parents/carers that we will continue to work in accordance with all advice and guidance published to schools from the DfE and PHE and that we will continue to ensure Titus Salt School is a COVID-19 Secure environment and provide for the education and welfare of your children.

Implementation of protective measures

In planning for full reopening of school in September we followed the advice and guidance from the DfE to ensure we comply with the protective measures which are:

- To advise anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 to not attend school
- Wear a face covering in school
- Clean hands regularly
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene by providing tissues

- Introduce enhanced cleaning
- Minimise contact and have in place social distancing where possible
- Keep occupied spaces ventilated

These protective measures have been in place since reopening in September and will continue to remain in place

If you have any concerns about any of what is contained in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at school. As previously stated, if the advice from Government changes before Tuesday 5 January 2021, I will write again to let you know how it will affect a return to school. As always, I wish to thank you for your continued support as we work effectively together in these challenging times.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the start of the New Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Morrel', written in a cursive style.

Ian Morrel
Headteacher