

1 January 2021



Dear Families

Happy New Year to you all, welcome to 2021 and good riddance to 2020. I hope that you managed to spend some quality time with your family and friends over the Christmas period and are ready to brave the worst of the winter before we start to emerge from these difficult times. Like me, I suspect the onset of flooding may well have made the festive period more difficult for some of you.

Whilst we still have significant challenges ahead, things are heading in the right direction. I write to update you after the statement made on Wednesday by the Education Secretary and, hopefully, to provide you with some clarity. In very simple terms, as it stands today, the intended schedule of return to school has been pushed back by a single week.

Week 1: Monday 4 January

School will **only** be open for the children of key-workers, vulnerable children and those with EHCPs. Parents of these children have already been contacted. Any queries regarding these specific arrangements should be referred to our Deputy Head, david.bishop@tewkeshuryschool.org. These children, segregated as previously in year group bubbles, will receive the same online learning as their peers who will be studying at home.

Sixth Form BTEC students will attend school to prepare for imminent examinations.

All other children in Y7-Y13 will receive their learning remotely. Queries around remote learning should be directed, in the first instance, to Deputy Head, clare.deglanville@tewkeshuryschool.org

Lateral flow tests will arrive in school on 4 January and we will immediately begin the testing process for students we have in school and members of staff who have granted consent.

Week 2: Monday 11 January

In addition to the children already in school during Week 1, we will welcome back students in Y11 and Y13 who are preparing for their GCSEs and A levels.

All other children in Y7-10 and Y12 will continue to receive their learning remotely.

Lateral flow testing will shift to students in Y11 and Y13.

Week 3: Monday 18 January

All students will be expected back in school for the full resumption of face-to-face education assuming they are not presenting with any symptoms of Covid-19 or need to self-isolate as members of the household are showing symptoms or have tested positive.

Evidence, both at Tewkesbury School and across Gloucestershire schools, indicates that most positive Covid cases in schools have been contracted by children outside of the school environment. Children will naturally not remain in single age bubbles outside of school and will not naturally socially distance either.

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In early December, as a result of just three positive Covid tests I found myself needing to ask almost 700 children to remain off school and continue their learning remotely. The advent of mass testing in schools will prove most helpful in keeping both children and staff in school.

Mass Testing in Schools

You will have heard by now of successful pilots of mass testing in schools which are now due to be rolled out across the country. Essentially, the intention here is to maximise the amount of time both students and staff are in school by removing the need to instruct large bubbles or close contacts to self-isolate when a single positive Covid case is identified. Students and staff will be given the opportunity to be tested daily, in school, using speedy lateral flow tests to allow them to remain in school if they continue to test negative.

I do, however, need parental consent for these tests to be undertaken. These tests are self-administered and clear instructions can be found [here](#). If you have not already done so, and many of you have, then please register [here](#) your consent or lack of consent.

In more general terms:-

- If your child is presenting with any Covid symptoms: continuous cough, high temperature or loss of taste/smell then please DO NOT send them back to school.
- If anyone in your household is awaiting a Covid test result then please DO NOT send your child(ren) back into school until a negative result has been confirmed.
- If you are in doubt in relation to the health of your child, then do please err on the side of caution and keep your child at home whilst they are tested.

The school has been thoroughly cleaned once again during the holiday and will continue to benefit from deep cleans and extensive fogging during term time. Please do expect to hear more from us over the next fortnight and get in touch if you have any concerns.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding.

Best wishes to you and your families



Mr G M Watson
Headteacher