

Headteacher:
Mrs M Davis

1st January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

As many of you will be aware, West Sussex has now been placed into a Tier 4 Covid-19 restriction level. In addition, the Secretary of State also made an announcement about the reopening of schools and mass testing on Wednesday 30th December.

Over this holiday there have been a number of changes:

1. West Sussex has been moved into Tier 4. Practically: This means clinically extremely vulnerable staff and students should not attend school. It also creates strict child care rules which will impact on staffing.
2. I took part in a briefing with the DFE regarding the roll out of mass testing in secondary schools. They have released some planning information for this and this suggests that we will need additional staff to run a testing regime at school. Obviously we need full consent, an appropriate room, the equipment and a transport plan for this to work alongside discussing this with families.
3. There are concerns over the new covid 19 strain being more easily transmitted meaning that further mitigation action may be needed.

As a result of the above it means that it has been necessary to revise our plans for the week commencing Monday 4th January 2021. I wanted to write as soon as possible to share our initial plans and I know that last minute changes are unhelpful, so please accept my apologies, but I'm sure you will understand why this is the case.

I have also been able to speak with all our Thrive Federation Heads and other special school head teachers, to share our thinking and explore all possible options. I believe we have reached a shared understanding of what we need to do to keep children in our Special Schools as safe as possible.

Mass Testing in Special Schools

As a school, we **will** be signing up to the national mass testing programme. We believe this will help us to be as safe as possible and to remain open. There is a lot of new guidance for us to follow, to put this in to place and we need time to do this properly.

It is most sensible to follow the guidance to offer all KS2, KS3 and KS5 staff testing **before** any secondary age pupils return to school. We have not yet received the testing kits, guidance or training on implementing the programme; the tests are due arrive on Monday 4th January. Therefore, the information in italics below is a guide; I will write and update you when I have further guidance and tutors will call all families on Monday 4th January

*We aim to offer mass testing (2 swabs, taken 3 days apart) to **all staff** and students over the age of 11, who can administer the test themselves or with minimum levels of prompting and encouragement.*

No pupil/student will be forced to be tested and testing will not take place without parental consent. It is imperative that you send back all consent forms we send to you so as we can be clear about your wishes.

We believe that offering mass testing as a school is an additional way of helping us reduce the risk of the virus in school and our wider communities. We will write separately to you about the testing procedures once we know more.

Tier Four Restrictions

As a school in a Tier Four area, any member of staff or pupil considered to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), must now stay at home and access remote education. You will receive a letter or text message from the government alerting you of this fact.

Primary Aged pupils

School remains open for primary pupils and staff, starting when originally planned. Primary age pupils are therefore expected to attend school from 5th January 2021, this will be Group 1 students in years 5 and 6. There may be a rota in place later in the week to accommodate G2.

Secondary Age

School remains open for all secondary pupils and staff, with a **delayed** start to the term. Pupils are therefore expected to attend school from Monday 11th January 2021. This may well be on rota system dependent on staffing available and completing the testing regime for all.

Returning to School in January

For primary age pupils and staff we will maintain the same procedures in place for a Covid secure environment. We therefore look forward to welcoming back pupils in G1 from Tuesday 5th January. Uniforms must be worn and clean masks everyday; please don't forget to ensure your son is wearing a mask in the taxi. Hand sanitising and frequent washing along with social distancing will again be encouraged. We will also be reducing the number of external visitors to school, in line with our own Covid-19 operational guidance.

Online learning platforms will be available next week. Work bundles, as well as FSMs for those eligible, will be dropped off alongside any learning tools students require. Please respond to your son's tutors calls next week to stay updated with any changes.

The government has given flexibility to the reopening of secondary age pupils in special schools, to allow us to prepare for mass testing. We are committed to opening our school as **safely** and as **soon** as possible. We have mass testing training and planning, and new national guidance to implement, so the start of our new term will begin for secondary pupils on Monday 11th January 2021.

I will write to you to confirm the plan as soon as I can. I aim to give you as much notice as possible.

My key message is that we need to plan for all eventualities and that whatever the media headlines the nuances and plans for special schools will be different.

Please be assured that the health and safety of our whole school community is my first priority.

With every best wish for a Happy and Healthy New year.

Yours sincerely



Mrs M Davis
Headteacher

If any of this information is not clear please telephone the school on 01903 731277 where someone will explain it to you

Cornfield School is part of the Federation of Special Schools comprising Cornfield, Oak Grove, Palatine and Herons Dale

