

18 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Firstly I want to thank you for the donations for the Christmas hampers and for Isabel Hospice. I know it has been a challenging year for many and I am delighted to say we have managed to raise £600. I sit and write this letter to you dressed as Mrs Claus and I look forward to seeing the fancy dress costumes today as we celebrate our annual Charity day. Thank you too for the many expressions of support and gifts that have arrived this week for our staff. This really lifts us, especially at a time when many families are facing difficult and uncertain times.



Like you, yesterday, I read the BBC news website to hear of the following announcements:

- Hertfordshire enters Tier 3 overnight this evening
- Testing of staff and students in secondary schools
- Staggered start to the spring term in January

The official government press release is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/staggered-rollout-of-coronavirus-testing-for-secondary-schools-and-colleges>

More about testing is available in another government press release here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secondary-schools-and-colleges-to-get-weekly-coronavirustesting>

I am supportive of the introduction of testing in schools, in order to reduce self-isolation periods for those who have been in close contact with a positive Coronavirus case. Indeed, it does make sense to have a phased return of students to the school site to avoid being overwhelmed if cases increase after Christmas. However, the timing of the announcement and lack of detail at present, means we cannot give you currently the level of detail we would like to. Please bear with us while we work through the guidance, be reassured that the safety of our students and staff is our priority.

January 2021

I can confirm that with effect from Tuesday 5 January 2021 lessons for students in year groups 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 at Ridgeway Academy will take place online, via Google Classroom.

Students are expected to follow their timetable daily, from registration until the end of period 5 (2.55pm).

Students in examination year groups 11 and 13 should attend school as normal.

Year 12 external examinations will run as scheduled.

Vulnerable students, including those with an EHCP and students whose parents/carers are classed as key workers should attend school.

Students will find details of work for each lesson in google classroom and will receive links to live google lessons via their school email account. Resources for lessons will be available on google classroom and students will be able to submit work using this platform.

Safeguarding

During the period when students are working remotely we expect that your child will be supervised. In common with holiday times, any safeguarding issues are your responsibility as parents/carers. If you have any concerns about the safeguarding of a child during this period you should call Children's Services:

0300 123 4043

If your child is not able to participate in the school day due to illness, please call the school every day on 01707 351350 and follow the options for the absence line.

Reporting a positive case over the holiday

Please continue to use the form on our website to alert us if your child develops symptoms over the school holiday. Schools are responsible for track and trace until 24 December. In reality, it will not result in isolation for staff or students of close school contacts beyond the child developing symptoms by Sunday 20 December at 12.30pm due to the 48-hour symptomatic window.

Testing

Information received thus far indicates that students who are returning will be offered a lateral flow test, and going forward, teachers can be tested weekly and students who have had contact with a positive case tested daily for a seven-day period. Consent will be required from the parent/carer. The staffing behind this is unclear at this point: our existing staff will be fully occupied in teaching or supporting your children either onsite or remotely and no capacity to undertake this significant task.

I am hoping that more detail will emerge in the coming days and there is some mention of the army being involved to support schools. It will be year 11 and 13 who will be first in the queue, so I will write to these year groups specifically when we know more. We will do our very best to support this initiative, but it would seem unlikely to be in place from the first day given that term has now ended and we don't have test kits, PPE, training or staff at this stage.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our students, parents and staff for being understanding and supportive at this time and wish you all a Merry Christmas.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S Mitcherson
Headteacher