

1 January 2021

TO ALL FAMILIES

Dear Families

### **Update - pupils and students returning to school**

I hope you have been able to enjoy the break. Following my email yesterday, the guidance for special schools returning in January has now been published and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>.

The key thing to note for families is that the guidance advises special schools that all pupils and students who wish to can return on **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January**. This will come as a relief to some families, and will create a great deal of anxiety for others, particularly given how the virus has escalated locally over the festive break. Please be assured that we continue to follow a live and rigorous risk assessment, along with existing infection control measures. Following the updated Government guidance, changes are being implemented as quickly as possible.

Families and schools do have some flexibility. Our duty is to ensure all pupils and students return on or after Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January. We recognise that this will be a decision that all families will need to make based on their own circumstances. In order to start a week later, families may request a leave of absence for their child, which will be agreed on a case-by-case basis and would be considered a leave of absence authorised by the school. **Please email [dsl@stdominicsschool.org.uk](mailto:dsl@stdominicsschool.org.uk) if you wish to keep your child at home during w/c Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January at the earliest possible opportunity.**

### **Testing**

Like all schools with secondary-aged pupils and students, we are setting up testing for staff and pupils and students in Years 7-13. We are confident that we can get testing established with our cohort within a week and are therefore aiming to be ready on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January for pupils and students, and will be starting to test staff next week, subject to receiving testing kits. This is to ensure we can manage the testing of all consenting pupils and students sensitively and with their sensory needs and any possible anxieties carefully considered. For this reason, other changes will be kept to an absolute minimum wherever possible. Please see the attached communication that was sent at the end of last term. A reminder, please, that consent forms and registration details must be returned as soon as possible and **no later than Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January**.

### **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Children and Adults**

Children who are deemed "clinically extremely vulnerable" will have received a letter from their doctor confirming this, and should not return on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January. With regard to children whose parents are deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, the DfE's guidance (published on 24<sup>th</sup> December) states "*Children and young people whose parents or carers are clinically extremely vulnerable can continue to go to school*". Please email [dsl@stdominicsschool.org.uk](mailto:dsl@stdominicsschool.org.uk) at the earliest possible opportunity so that we can support your child to the best of our ability.

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Staff who are deemed “clinically extremely vulnerable” will also have received a letter from their doctor confirming this and therefore deployment of staff will need to be changed for this purpose and to accommodate other absences i.e. isolating throughout the coming weeks. We will endeavour to keep as much continuity as possible for the children, but need to be clear that currently this may not always be possible to achieve; keeping classes open will be our first priority.

### **Families Isolating**

The testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss of change to your sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. **Please let us know if you are self-isolating through the usual absence reporting process from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January or before, if you are able** It is important that you report confirmed cases to school to support us with track and trace.

**Until testing is in place, our existing measures will remain.**

### **Remote Education**

Remote education will be prioritised for all pupils and students learning from home between Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January and Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January. School will provide:

- Lessons and activities (including NLC) for the duration via Google Classroom. This will include at least four lessons per day, including Maths, English, and a rotation of other subjects
- Therapeutic input, in person or remotely, in a modified format

### **Transport**

We have informed SEN transport that we will be open to all pupils and students. Please notify your child's taxi company of their return to school date if you are electing to take the authorised leave of absence.

Please continue to help us by respecting the Government's directives on controlling the COVID pandemic. This is particularly challenging for everyone; we thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



Vicky Perry  
Vice Principal & Head of Education