

1 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and your family are well and have managed to enjoy the Christmas break together so far. This letter is to inform you about the announcement made by the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson on Wednesday 30 December 2020 and discuss the arrangements for the beginning of the Spring Term for your child. This letter will cover information about mass testing at St Mark's and clarify the educational offer for your child.

We know you will have many questions and I am confident you will find the answers here. If this letter does not answer your questions, please email school@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk where emails will be picked from Tuesday 5th January.

Is St Mark's taking part in mass testing of students?

We are working to keep St Mark's as safe as possible. You may have heard that testing for secondary age pupils is beginning across the country using new, quicker Covid-19 Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs), and St Mark's will be starting this from 6th January following a robust training programme on Tuesday 5th January for staff. We require staff to volunteer to support because we believe they know students best. The process will involve:

- Testing all staff without a negative PCR test on their return to the Academy.
- Testing staff once a week who want to participate thereafter.
- Testing students twice between 6th January and 22nd January.
- Helping pupils to stay in education, by enabling those who are close contacts of someone who tests positive to stay in school if they do a daily test for seven days, known as 'serial testing'.

What do I need to do as a parent to support mass testing?

- We texted and sent all parents and carers a consent form via Parentmail. This needs to be completed by all parents and carers to allow us to start mass testing students.
- If your child is over 16, they do not require parental consent.
- It is completely your choice as parents whether to consent, however I would urge you to consider what a positive impact it will have on the safety of our community.

When will my child be tested?

We have created the following provisional timeline:

- Staff, vulnerable and key worker students and those in Year 11, 12 and 13 will be tested between 6th January and 15th January.
- Students in Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 will be tested between 11th January and 22nd January

Interim Principal Hannah Fahey

- Students will be given a day and time to come in twice for a test between the dates above. Each time they are tested students will need to wait 30 minute for the result. If the result is negative, they will go home and continue to access remote education on Teams until they begin face to face education (details of these dates are below).
- If the result is positive, the young person will need to go home, book a PCR test and isolate until that result comes back.

When will my child return to St Mark's?

- The Government have announced that there is to be a staggered return which will limit face-to-face education to specific groups of pupils in the first two weeks of term.
- From the beginning of term (Wednesday 6th January), St Mark's will provide remote education for examination groups (Years 11 and 13). This means students in these years must log onto Teams and complete the work set by teachers every day.
- Vulnerable children or the children of key workers will return on Wednesday 6 January.
- From 11th January we will provide remote education for all students in Years 7-13 and will begin to welcome Year 11 and 13 back for face to face learning. A specific day will be provided to parents with children in those years once we roll out mass testing and begin to understand how quickly tests can be administered.
- We will begin to welcome back students in Years 7-10 from 18th January and will communicate a specific day with you once we begin to trial the mass testing programme.
- Whether your child is being tested or not, all in one year group will return on the same day.
- It is important to note that this information is subject to review of the Contingency Framework which will happen prior to 18th January. This is something we will communicate with parents when the review takes place

Finally, I wanted to confirm that scheduled BTEC examinations tests will continue to take place in early January with appropriate controls and social-distancing.

Please can I thank you once again for your support as parents as we take on this new challenge to welcome all students and staff back safely. The Academy will remain a safe place for your child to learn and thrive this academic year and you have my word that we will continue to transform the lives of every young person who studies with us.

With Love, Hope & Trust



Hannah Fahey
Interim Principal