

31 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to wish you a happy and safe New Year and hope 2021 brings some normality back to school life eventually.

As you will be aware, yesterday the Government announced changes to the arrangements for the return to school following the Christmas break. These changes have been made because of a rise in Covid-19 transmission rates and to break chains of transmission, as well as keeping your child safe in school.

The arrangements for the return to school are as follows:

Week beginning Monday 4 January:

- From Monday 4 January **vulnerable students and children of critical workers in Years 7-11** will have face to face learning in school
- **Year 11 only** remote learning from home will commence from Period 2 on Monday 4 January
- **Years 7-10** remote learning from home will commence from Tuesday 5 January
- All staff to return to school as normal
- Wednesday 6 January testing to start for Year 11
- From Thursday 7 January we aim to start testing all other year groups.

Week beginning Monday 11 January:

- Year 11s join the vulnerable students and children of critical workers learning in school
- Year 7-10 students continue remotely learning from home
- Testing continues
- All previous protective measures apply.

Week beginning Monday 18 January:

- All students in all year groups return to school
- Testing continues.

Arrangements for remote learning

Remote learning will commence for Year 11 students from Period 2 on Monday 4 January, and we expect all students to follow their normal timetable, where possible. Please ensure your child is familiar with signing into Microsoft Teams. A short help guide is attached. I am conscious that juggling the use of computers and other devices between siblings can be a challenge. Please do encourage your child to let their teachers know via the class Teams 'posts' or the secure Castle email if they can't attend the lesson. A recording of most lessons will be available via Teams so your child can view at a different time when necessary. I hope this will give families some flexibility.

Year 11 Vulnerable students and children of critical workers

Our aim is to have vulnerable children and children of critical workers in school, for face-to-face lessons from Monday 4 January. The following link defines critical workers, [Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings). If you feel your job role applies to the critical worker definitions and you need to send your child into school from Monday 4 January, please complete the following form

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=L-EUL11N3USI2F3alfkrxIAbvdjeBH5AjFc_8JGEJkdUMjYxMjRFNIMzSkZOVDVZNUtPVDY0OU05Ri4u .

The school will contact vulnerable children's families direct before Monday.

Year 11 Covid-19 testing Wednesday 6 January

We are aiming and hoping to do our very best to have all staff and students tested before they return to school. There are a number of logistical hurdles to overcome before we are able to offer testing in school.

As Year 11 are due to return on Monday 11 January, they will be our priority.

We will be inviting all Year 11 students into school on **Wednesday 6 January** to have the first of two tests, the second will be on Monday 11 January. This will require a staggered start to the Monday. More information about time and location of the tests will be sent on Tuesday 5 January as well as information about the second test on Monday 11 January.

If your child needs some specific work to support remote home learning, they will be able to collect it on this day, when they come in for their test.

Consent Forms

We will require **consent from you to carry out the testing**. This form must be completed by the student's parent or legal guardian and you will need to complete one consent form for each child. These will be sent to you on Tuesday 5 January. Please ensure your child brings this form into school on Wednesday when they come in for their first test.

Supporting the Testing Process

If you feel you would be able to help administer testing on site or know someone suitable who would like to help, please complete the application form [here](#) and email to covid@castle.somerset.sch.uk by no later than Sunday at 6pm (PLEASE DO NOT SEND TO THE RECRUITMENT EMAIL ON THE APPLICATION FORM). Paid roles vary from a registration assistants, results co-ordinators, testing assistants and processors. Working hours vary and pay is £8.72 per hour. All safer recruitment checks will need to be carried out, of course.

Free School Meals

Free school meals will be available from the canteen from Monday 4 January for eligible vulnerable students and children of critical workers who are in school. Other children's families eligible for free school meals will be provided with a voucher next week.

Existing Protective Measures

Please note all other protective measures that were in place prior to Christmas will continue, including the wearing of face covering in corridors and indoor social spaces. It is also important to reiterate that at the start of next term:

- Students should stay at home if they have any of the three key Covid-19 symptoms – a high temperature, a persistent cough, or a loss of smell or taste – and request a test via the NHS;
- Students should stay at home if any member of their household has any of these symptoms and await the outcome of the test result of that household member;
- Students should stay at home and isolate for 10 days if they have been a close contact of a positive case.

If your child develops symptoms, she/he must have a test and if the test is positive and the symptoms started when she/he was in school, you do have to inform us so that we can track and trace close contacts in his /her lessons and friendship group. Please email covid@castle.somerset.sch.uk and this will be picked up the same day so we can start contacting students.

Clearly this will cause you as parents' considerable difficulty and it is not the start I wanted for The Castle School. However, with the rise in transmission, we do need to play our part as a school in trying to reduce this.

Please do take care of yourselves and thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Mr Lamb
Headteacher
The Castle School

Helplines and websites:

Additional remote learning resources:

The Oak National Academy can be accessed here: <https://www.thenational.academy>

BBC Bitesize can be accessed here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Support for parents of secondary age students online: <https://parentinfo.org/article/video-chatting-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-ofsecondary-school-age-children>

Pastoral support and help:

Out of hours and emergency numbers are also on the website front page -keep scrolling down.

<https://www.castleschool.co.uk>.

Or on the help and support page on the website <https://www.castleschool.co.uk/students/help-and-support.htm>

Help can also be found here:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications>

<http://www.sharesomerset.co.uk>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/worried-about-your-teenager/>