



Thursday 31st December, 2020.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Further to my letter yesterday and following the government's announcement regarding the return of secondary schools in January, I wanted to provide you with some further information about our remote learning offer, proposed mass testing, the provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils and free school meals.

Staggered return of pupils and remote learning

All pupils with the exception of both vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers who intend to attend school should remain at home next week. The government had intended that Year 11 would return to school from Tuesday 5th of January but they have now announced that this will be from Monday 11th of January, with all other year groups returning from Monday 18th of January. The government have asked schools to provide remote online learning to pupils in Year 11 next week and for other year groups from Monday 11th of January. Whilst we understand the rationale is to give schools the time to prepare for mass testing, we don't want this to be at the expense of more lost learning for our young people. We will therefore be providing remote learning for all pupils across all year groups from Tuesday the 5th of January.

Lessons will be conducted through Teams, which pupils are all aware of and for which they have received training twice already this year, building on their use across the lockdown period that ran from March. Pupils have a subject team for each of their subject classes and we expect them, from Tuesday, to follow their usual school timetable accessing Teams to interact with their staff and complete work set. We will be asking pupils to identify themselves to the member of staff at the start of the lesson and at the end of the lesson to ensure attendance.

It's important to stress that presence in the lesson doesn't necessarily represent engagement and so staff will be setting mini online assessments at the end of the week to assess the understanding of pupils in relation to the content delivered across the week. Where staff identify that pupils haven't been present in class regularly or there is concern that they've failed to engage with work and activities set, we'll contact parents to discuss our concerns.

There will, of course, be occasions where pupils are not able to engage in home learning, for example they might be unwell. In this case we'd ask parents contact the school following the usual procedures to report illness so that we know not to expect pupils in virtual lessons.

We have issued several laptops to eligible pupils and to our knowledge we've ensured that pupils now have access to equipment that allows them to access Teams. Where there are concerns relating to access to Teams for any reason we have set up a dedicated email address for parents to direct queries remotelearning@penkethhigh.org.



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THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

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Principal: Mr J Carlin BA(Hons) NPQH



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Mass Testing

As I'm sure parents are aware, the government have asked schools to set up mass testing centres in school. This affords pupils and staff the opportunity to undertake two 'lateral flow tests' as they return to school. It is our intention to roll out this testing programme from Tuesday 5th of January. In the first instance we will prioritise testing in relation to the phased and staggered return dates for pupils. So vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers present in school next week will be offered the opportunity to be tested first, upon their immediate return to school. We will also be offering tests to Year 11 pupils next week by appointment ahead of their return from the 11th of January. Finally, pupils across Year 7 – 10 will be offered tests across the week commencing 11th of January before their return on the 18th of January.

Following the initial testing programme for all, testing will then focus on the close contacts of anyone who tests positive in school, giving pupils who've been in close contact the option of remaining in school but testing each day for 7 days rather than self-isolating. Where this is the case we'll contact parents directly to seek consent and to arrange.

We'll be issuing a separate letter to the parents of vulnerable pupils, those who are key workers and whose children will be attending school and parents of Year 11 pupils in the next 24 hours. This will provide more information on the testing process and include a link to a form to complete online giving your consent for pupils to undertake testing. We would need this form completing by Monday 4th of January should you wish your child to participate in testing.

Further information regarding testing will be issued to the parents of Year 7 – 10 pupils towards the end of next week ahead of their testing window from the 11th of January.

Keyworker and vulnerable pupil provision

As you know school was due to return on Tuesday the 5th of January, from this date we will be offering an onsite provision for all pupils in Year 7 – 11 who are either classed as vulnerable or who are the children of critical key workers. We have already spoken to the parents of all vulnerable children prior to us closing for Christmas and, given the changes identified by the government yesterday, will be contacting the parents and guardians of vulnerable pupils in Year 11 on Monday.

For those children of key workers we asked parents to contact keyworkers@penkethhigh.org to identify where their child would be returning to school. Thank you to those who have contacted us, we have sent an email to all of those families today providing further details around arrangements for attendance.

Pupils in school next week will access classrooms with pupils from their own year group in order to maintain the integrity of our "bubbles" ahead of the wider return of pupils from the 11th and 18th of January. The school day will operate as normal, so pupils should arrive at their usual staggered start time assigned for their year group.

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The school canteen will be open as normal for pupils to purchase food and I have confirmed this morning that school buses will be running as normal. So pupils in attendance next week simply need to follow their normal routine; though they will undertake all of their lessons in one room and we will inform them of this on their arrival on Tuesday.

Finally, having looked at the weather forecast for next week, it appears that it will remain cold. Guidance for safe operation dictates that we need to ventilate areas including classrooms so, with this in mind, we will be removing the need for pupils to wear their uniform next week. They can wear their own clothes in order that they can wrap up warm should they feel the need to.

Free School Meals

We will be contacting the families of all pupils eligible for free school meals but who are not present in school across the day on Monday.

We are currently in an extremely fluid situation and over the course of the next few weeks there might be some further adaptations to plans. I recognise that the timing of the latest government announcement has been difficult for families, but we'll do whatever we can to adapt quickly and to keep you updated. I'd like to thank all of those staff who have worked across the Christmas break, planning for arrangements issued at the end of term and subsequently adapting plans across the day today.

The safe operation of our school to ensure the wellbeing of our pupils, staff and wider community remains a key priority, as does providing our young people with access to learning to support their wider development and future successes.

I'd like to wish you and your families all the very best for the new year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.

Principal.



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