

*'We value the power of education to change lives'*

18<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Re: Start of Term, Covid Testing and Remote Education

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

I did say in my recent end of term letter that we could all expect further challenges in 2021. I didn't think we'd have our first challenge thrown at us before the current term even ended!

As you are no doubt aware from media coverage yesterday afternoon the government decided to stagger the start of the Spring Term for secondary schools and run a nationwide testing programme in schools.

Assuming the government do not make any further changes then at Highcliffe School next term:

### Education

- Year 11 and 13 will return to school on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January exactly as normal on the first day. School buses and minibuses will run as normal all week
- The children of Key Workers and those identified as Vulnerable or At Risk will also return to school on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January and will be able to access the learning provided to their peers at home, from school. The list of students known to be in either of these categories (used up until July) is being updated at present. We will provide further communication about this before term starts
- Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will receive online education from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January using our now well-established system. Students should expect to get up at the normal time and have a normal school day closely aligned to the normal timetable. They should also expect homestudy to be set as a follow-up to their lessons, as it would if they were in school
- From Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January, Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will also return to education on site at school

All parents/carers in Years 7 to 13 have already received a copy of our Remote Education Policy and Privacy Notice but will be sent them again before term starts. These documents set out what students can expect from the school educationally and what the responsibilities and obligations of parents and students are to support safe and effective learning at home.

### Testing

- We will deliver on site a lateral flow rapid-test programme to all the students who choose to opt in, between 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of January. This will involve *two* tests for each student, 3 days apart. Families are informed of the result electronically i.e., by email, message or notification
- Students who test positive will need to go into self-isolation and have a regular PCR test to confirm the result
- Students who opt into the testing programme and subsequently become direct contacts of someone who tests positive may not need to self-isolate if they continue to do lateral flow rapid tests. Instead they may continue to attend school

- Year 11 and 13 and the staff will be tested on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January for the first time and Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> for the second time. Information about the other year groups will be sent before term starts
- Based on the current guidance given to schools we estimate that, if all/nearly all Highcliffe students opt in, the two test centres we establish in school will need to run anywhere up to 8 to 10 hours a day for 6 days including Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January, to be ready to bring the whole school back on 11<sup>th</sup> January. So there probably will be both daytime and evening slots for testing

*Further details about the testing programme, including a request for parental permission to do the rapid tests, will be sent to you over the school holidays.*

### **Helping us**

Whilst the testing programme can be carried out by staff, we would greatly appreciate offers of support from parents willing to be trained to do one of the seven different roles in the testing process, to limit the number of staff redeployed from their actual role in school to do testing – especially in view of the possible 8 hour days needed to deliver the programme.

Parent volunteers do not need to do the swab testing itself unless they choose to; there are administrative and recording roles too. They will work under the supervision and with the support of staff and do not need a DBS check. Training will run on the Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January at school. If you are willing to help even if only for few hours, please email [office@highcliffeschool.com](mailto:office@highcliffeschool.com) to let us know. You do not need prior medical experience.

### **Finally**

Putting all that to one side I feel it important to share with you how wonderful – indeed I might say *magical* – it's been in school these last couple of days before Christmas. What an incredible achievement our Online Christmas Concert was - I do hope you watched it but if you missed it you can still view it via the link sent out. Around school our students have been such a joy to be with, everything a parent would want of their child – polite, kind to each other, excited about Christmas, tired but happy, optimistic for the future. So many students have said 'thank you' to staff for everything we've done for them this term. What a privilege and pleasure to spend one's working life with such decent, talented young people.

Wishing you all a wonderful and safe holiday,



Patrick Earnshaw  
Headteacher