

Saturday, 2nd January 2020

Dear Families

Update - students returning to school

I hope you have been able to enjoy the break.

Following my email on Thursday, 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/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

The key thing to note for families is that the guidance advises special schools that all students who wish to, can return on Monday 4th January. However as previously stated we have instigated an **emergency INSET day on the 4th**, as permitted by the government, so that we can ensure we have everything in place for a safe return for all. **Therefore pupils will be able to return from Tuesday 5th January at 9am.** The return to school will come as a relief to some families, but for others it will bring a great deal of anxiety, particularly given that the virus has escalated locally over the festive break.

I would like to remind you that, throughout the pandemic, we have maintained a live and robust risk assessment, including individual risk assessments for vulnerable staff members and students who have been identified as particularly vulnerable. We maintain regular contact with Public Health Kingston and with Achieving for Children, ensuring that our practice is as strong as it can be. Within school we have a number of controls in place which significantly reduce the risk of infection. These include: sanitisers and hand-wash throughout the school, temperatures taken of pupils every morning, staff wear face coverings in all communal areas, designated areas for staff to eat ensure bubbles are not mixed during breaks, strict cleaning measures for indoor and outdoor spaces and equipment and designated isolation rooms should students become unwell.

From January, we will be instigating weekly testing of staff at Dysart to help us identify those staff members who are infectious but who are not displaying any symptoms i.e. they are Asymptomatic.

We will be further tightening the process for educational visits in the local community which will continue to include parents always giving express consent to any visits their child participates in. Only essential visitors will be allowed to enter the school, but will need to complete a declaration of health and will be required to have their temperature taken before entering.

Continued...

If you are particularly worried about your child returning to school on, 4th January, please contact a member of the senior leadership team to discuss your concerns. As per the guidance linked above, there is the opportunity for some flexibility regarding a return date, however such decisions must be decided on a case by case basis. **Please email Sue Bashford on sbashford@dysartschool.org, at the earliest opportunity, if you wish to keep your child at home during week beginning Monday 4th January and she will ensure a member of the SLT will be in touch with you to discuss this further.**

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 5th of January. With regard to children whose parents are deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, the DfE's guidance (published on 24th December) states 'Children and young people whose parents or carers are clinically extremely vulnerable can continue to go to school'.

If your child or family require any support during this period of time please contact the schools leadership team via Sue Bashford or the school office at the earliest possible opportunity so that we can provide support to the best of our ability.

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 safely will be our first priority.

Families Isolating

The testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child, or anyone in your household, develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss of, or 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>.

In this case your child must not come into school.

Please let us know if you are self-isolating through the usual absence reporting process from Monday 4th January or before, if you are able. It is important that you report confirmed cases to school to support us with test and trace.

Transport

We have informed Kingston SEN transport that we will be open to all pupils and students from **Tuesday 5th January**. Please notify your child's transport provider if their return to school is delayed by you electing to take the authorised leave of absence.

Continued...

During the coming weeks we will do our very best to keep school open to those pupils whose families would like them to continue attending but there may be instances where we need to close individual bubbles for reasons that are beyond our control (e.g. Covid test results, staff's own children having to remain at home due to their school closing). Please can I ask you once again, to let other families know if you think they may not check their emails?

Please continue to help us by respecting the Government's directives on controlling the COVID pandemic. Thank you for your ongoing support; this is a particularly challenging time for everyone, and your kind words and support mean a great deal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leigh Edser".

Leigh Edser
Principal