



St. Thomas More High School

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26th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family are safe and well. As you are aware the Prime Minister announced the route out of lock down on Monday evening followed by the announcement yesterday about how exam grades will be awarded for A level, GCSE and BTEC students in the summer. It has, as you can imagine, been the most hectic few days trying to get our heads around how the School will re-open and what steps we will need to take to ensure that grades are awarded fairly and accurately for our examination cohort. This letter is a brief introduction to setting out more detailed plans, which will follow next week but these are our intentions:

- The School will re-open on 8th March with a phased return, starting with Years 11 and 13 students in on that day.
- We are asking all pupils and staff to access a lateral flow test at their **local community testing site BEFORE** they return to school. Please then report this outcome on the [Student COVID Test Outcome Form](#)
- Students who have [consent](#) from parents/carers will then be able to access two subsequent tests within the first two weeks during their school day or again with you, their primary educators, at their local community testing site. They will then be given tests to conduct at home and these will be sent with full instructions as and when we receive them. Participation is optional but I would encourage everyone to take part. Testing will be offered free of charge.
- You should receive with this letter another regarding your [consent](#) for testing and a privacy notice about how your data will be handled. These will also be available on our website.
- Please ensure that you take your son or daughter to one of your local community testing sites for a lateral flow test, which is for people without symptoms. Details of these sites are below:

[Getting tested for COVID-19 – Coronavirus information and guidance – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#)

[Current Covid Testing Sites \(arccgis.com\)](#)

[Getting tested: If you don't have symptoms - Essex County Council](#)

[Getting a test | Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | Thurrock Council](#)

[Covid 19 testing | The London Borough Of Havering](#)

[Get a coronavirus test | LBBD](#)

- This mass testing beginning across the country using the new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow devices' is one of the protective measures we are taking, to help staff and students remain in school safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no

symptoms. By testing we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our school open as safely as possible.

- Attendance for students from 8th March is mandatory on a phased return basis, unless students are shielding and are designated as being clinically extremely vulnerable.
- When students return to school, all year groups will now be required to wear face coverings/masks in the classroom and when moving around the School unless they are exempt. They may also be required to wear them outside where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- As year groups are brought in on a phased return, remaining year groups will need to have remote learning set on Teams in that week and we are currently reviewing whether we are able to do a blend of live, pre-recorded and set work in the week commencing 8th March.
- The school day will be as it was prior to the lock down in January and the bubbles and timings of the day will not change.

I am in the process of preparing a much more detailed plan once we have completed the appropriate consultations with the Local Authority, Public Health England and the DfE.

As you can imagine, there is a great deal of planning to undertake in preparation for our re-opening and I know that, with your support, we will be able to open fully as soon as possible and ensure that we provide a safe environment for staff and students to work in over the next few months.

I know this has been an incredibly challenging time for all our families and I am grateful for everything you have done to support us during this time. There may be anxieties, concerns, worries over returning to school but, rest assured, we will do everything we can to make the transition back into full-time education as safe and as smooth as possible. I will write to you again in the early part of next week with further details and plan for when your son/daughter/s year group will attend school for the first time.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs G Ackred
Headteacher