



24<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sure you are aware that on Monday afternoon the Prime Minister announced a four stage plan for the country moving out of lockdown. This includes the wider opening of schools to all pupils during the week beginning the 8<sup>th</sup> March. Everyone at Stafford Manor High School is so pleased that we will be able to welcome children back to school for face to face lessons, but it is vitally important that we do this in line with all the Government guidance to make it as safe as possible.

We are now undertaking a comprehensive review of our risk assessment in light of the new guidance to ensure our system of controls provides a COVID secure environment. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will be prioritising the safety of students, staff and our families in the measures we take. At this stage I can reassure you that all the measures we introduced in the Autumn Term will remain in place. There will also be some additional measures that help facilitate the safe return of pupils as transmission rates of coronavirus across the country do remain high.

### **Testing**

On their return to school, all pupils will be offered the opportunity to take three Lateral Flow Tests over the first two weeks. After the initial programme of three tests in school, students will be provided with two rapid tests each week to use at home. Testing using Lateral Flow Device's helps to identify asymptomatic cases (people displaying no symptoms) and suppress the transmission of the virus in school. Anyone who does test positive will be required to self-isolate for 10 days in line with Government guidance. It is important to note that testing is voluntary but 'strongly encouraged'.

### **Return dates**

To allow for the testing of children to be completed in the safest possible way, Government guidance does enable schools to phase the return of pupils during the week of the 8<sup>th</sup> March. We will be using this approach as it will help ensure we minimise the need to instruct a class or year group to immediately self-isolate for ten days should a positive case be identified. We will be prioritising the return of Key Stage 4 and 5 students at the start of the week and Key Stage 3 later in the week. Exact return days and information regards the testing programme will be shared as soon as plans have been confirmed.

### **Face coverings**

The Government is now recommending that all children and staff should wear a face covering when inside the school building including classrooms. This is in addition to wearing them on corridors and in communal spaces. Initially this guidance has been implemented until the end of this term and will be reviewed at Easter. We appreciate that some people are exempt from wearing a face covering in specific cases and we will explain how you can confirm this with

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school. Please ensure that your child has an adequate supply of face coverings for their return to school. We will share more details regards the safe wearing of face coverings prior to your child returning to school.

### **Attendance**

From the allocated start date for your child, attendance will once again become mandatory for all pupils. Those children that are extremely clinically vulnerable and have received a letter from their healthcare professional that instructs them to shield must contact the school immediately to discuss arrangements. We do understand that some of you may be anxious about your child's return to school and we would encourage you to contact us if you have any concerns. We are here to help and can talk through all the measures that are in place to keep us all as safe as possible.

### **Exams**

We are still awaiting details of how Year 11 and 13 pupils will be awarded their GCSE and BTEC grades this year. Current Government guidance states that schools will have this information 'very soon'. Once details have been confirmed we will communicate with relevant families the process and implications for the remaining few months at school.

Although we are all keen to have our children return to school, it remains vitally important that anyone who is displaying any of the three main symptoms of coronavirus (high temperature, new continuous cough, or a loss of taste or smell) does not attend school and immediately seeks a test through the NHS by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>. Furthermore, if anyone in your household has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, then your child must also self-isolate for 10 days and not attend school. Please do contact the school straight away if your child falls into these categories or you simply need advice before sending your child to school. All the relevant Government guidance on self-isolation can be found [here](#). Any COVID related absence is coded in a particular way and does not count negatively towards a child's attendance.

I hope this provides you with some initial information regards the return of your child to school. We will share specific details when we have confirmed arrangements and will be working tirelessly over the next few days to get this to you as soon as possible. It is important for us to take the time to make sure our systems and procedures continue to maintain a safe environment for everyone. It is an exciting time and one that I am sure we have all been waiting for. Hopefully this is also a significant step closer to us all experiencing wider freedoms by the summer. Please do not hesitate to contact us at school if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



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Headteacher

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