

21st December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Government directed staggered return in January 2021

You will have seen in the news that the Government has announced [recently](#) a staggered return for secondary pupils at the start of next term. This will affect children in Years 7 and 8. On Friday 18th December 2020, I shared that I wanted all children to be in school from the start of term to learn and benefit from face-to-face teaching. However, in light of the new strain of Covid-19, rising infection rates and the Government's changes to Christmas arrangements, we are required to adopt this staggered approach to enable us to implement the testing procedures and comply with the Department for Education's guidance.

On the week commencing **4th January** we will use the extra training day the Government has given schools on the 4th of January 2021 to prepare for mass testing in school.

For the rest of the week, the following will apply:

- Students in Year 5 and 6, will all attend school as normal from Tuesday 5th January 2021.
- We will provide full-time remote education to all other pupils in Years 7 and 8 from Tuesday 5th January 2021.
- Children will be able to access remote learning via our VLE, ITS Learning Platform, **following timings of lessons in their normal school timetable with 'live' lessons delivered by teachers as we did during the lockdown period last Summer. Teachers will add a Microsoft Teams link to dated lessons daily and deliver virtual lessons, virtual tutor times and virtual assemblies as per their timetables in planners. These Microsoft Team links for lessons will be set up by staff on Monday 4th January 2021 and these will be accessed via each course on the ITS Learning Platform.**
- In accordance with the Government's guidance, vulnerable children as well as the children of key workers in Years 7 and 8, will all be able to attend school in person from the start of term. These children will attend the same 'live lessons' as their peers, following their normal school timetable. If you fall into this category, please email the school (office@westmoorsmid.dorset.sch.uk) by return and before 3pm on Monday 4th January 2021, including details of your job/role.
- Wednesday 6th January and Thursday 7th January: Continued face-to-face teaching for all children in KS2 and final preparations and training on testing procedures.
- Children in Year 7 will all attend school in person from Friday 8th January 2021 and those with parental permission will be tested on this day to stagger the testing procedures across KS3.

The directive of the Department for Education to establish a COVID-19 mass-testing system within schools aims to help deliver the national priority of keeping as many children and teachers as possible in school beyond the start of term, minimising the spread of the virus and disruption caused by coronavirus cases arising in education settings. We understand that more information will be published but what we know so far about the Government's rapid testing programme is that:

- Children in Year 7 and 8 will be eligible to be tested weekly
- Children who are identified as a close contact of someone who's tested positive will be eligible
- All staff will be eligible to be tested weekly
- While testing will be optional, we strongly encourage staff and children to take part
- Parents/ carers will need to sign a consent form- your child will only participate in testing with your consent
- If someone tests **negative**, they'll still need to follow our social distancing and hand/ respiratory hygiene protocols
- If someone tests **positive**, we'll ask them to self-isolate in line with the Government's guidance

The Government has identified 'key worker' and 'vulnerable' children as follows:

A key worker is anyone who works in:

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services (including the justice system, religious staff, charities delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting)
- Local and national government (those who are involved in delivering the coronavirus response or essential public services)
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services

Vulnerable children are those who:

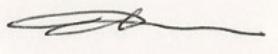
- Are assessed as being in need, including those with a child in need plan or child protection plan
- Are looked after by the local authority
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- Have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by the school or LA, including children who:
- Are on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
- Are adopted
- Are at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
- Are living in temporary accommodation
- Are young carers
- May have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)

From Monday 11th January 2021, we will welcome all children back to school for face-to-face education. Having completed the testing of Year 7 children, on Friday 8th January 2021, the testing of children in KS3 will continue on Monday 11th January 2021 with children in Year 8 who have parental permission.

All that remains is for me to say thank you so much for your continued support as we respond to this rapidly evolving situation, and when the Government publishes more information on the testing programme itself, I will write to you again.

We look forward to welcoming your child back to school next term in line with the dates above. Until then, please keep safe and although this Christmas will now look very different to the one we envisaged before last weekend, may it bring us light and love, as we remain thankful for all we have.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Deborah Craddock', is placed on a light beige rectangular background.

Dr Deborah Craddock
Headteacher