

23 February 2021



Dear Parent/Guardian

I am sure you are aware of the Government's announcement yesterday that all students should return to school from March the 8<sup>th</sup>. Staff in schools, such as myself, only get to hear the news at the same time as you. After making their initial announcement, the Government then starts to release details of their plans and expectations in more detail – these details are emerging now with further webinars promised during the rest of this week. I am explaining this because I would like you to understand why I am not yet in a position to let you know the details of what will be happening here at Sandwich Technology School during the week beginning the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, but I would like to reassure you that we are working on it and will let you know as soon as we can.

You may have seen that part of the plan is that we, as a school, will test all staff and students (1600 people) twice during that week, whilst ensuring safe social distancing. This is a significant logistical challenge and we did not know of this plan until yesterday. The Government has said that, to help this happen, particularly at secondary schools, not all students will be returning to school on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, but these tests and the students' return can be staggered across the week. We will, in accordance with Department for Education expectations, prioritise Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 because of the examination courses they are following. I will be honest and say that I am concerned about how possible the testing expectations are for a school as large as ours, but we will do our best and will aim to have all children tested (at least once) and back in school by Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. This may require some flexibility from you in terms of getting your child to school at a particular time to do a test and then completing further remote learning for some of that week at home. I fully understand that this will not be easy for some of you, but hopefully it will mean that the students will soon be where they belong – back in the classroom and learning with us.

When the students are back it is our intention to focus very much on high-quality classroom-based teaching as much as possible. In keeping with the DfE's expectations, we believe that now is not the time to subject the students to formal assessments. We instead wish to spend time teaching the students and facilitating them with opportunities to learn and to produce some excellent work. We will use formative (classroom/homework-based) assessment to ascertain where the students are with their learning and to offer support where necessary. We will do everything we can to help the students to catch up, but – to those students whose weekly engagement registers have consistently shown little or no engagement – I am afraid we cannot fully compensate for weeks of no work; the resources are all available on the website and I would encourage all those students to make attempts to catch up as best they can in their remaining time at home. It is not too late. I hope you will agree that, when the students return, we should use that time to catch up with teaching content and enjoying learning, rather than asking the students to do formal tests.

Upon the students' return, we will, of course, have many of the same rules in place that we had earlier in the year to help keep students safe, but there will also be further rules – the Government would now like students to wear masks in the classroom, for example. We will ensure that these rules are made clear to the students on their return and I would ask you, please, to help ensure the students understand the importance of following them. Like before, we will not be lending equipment (because of the risk of passing on infection), so please ensure your child has a fully stocked pencil case.

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With regard to Year 11, Year 12 Transition Students and Year 13, and what the arrangements are for the awarding of their examination grades, the Government is due to publish the result of the consultation on this on Thursday. As you have heard me say before, we will let you know as soon as we know.

I would like to thank you all for the support you have given your children and the school with this second prolonged period of remote learning – I really do understand how difficult it is. Let's hope this is the last time we are in this position. We are very much looking forward to having the students back in school – we have missed them. In the meantime, please bear with us, and further details of the return to school will be with you soon.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Savage', written in a cursive style.

Tracey Savage  
Headteacher