

26 February 2021



Dear Parent/Guardian

Thank you for your patience in waiting for this letter. I apologise as I know it is a long one, but please do read it all as it does contain some crucial information about your child's return to school. We now have a full plan in place for the week beginning the 8th of March and the return of all of the students, which we are all very much looking forward to.

Before I get into the detail of that, I would like to address a very good point that a couple of parents raised after my letter on Tuesday. In that letter I said that the testing was causing us logistical problems that we needed time to resolve and I was asked why this was, given that I first informed you all that the Government had told us of the need to test all students back in December – in which case, we had had plenty of time to prepare. I can totally understand why I was asked this question. However, after that December announcement, the Government then said that secondary schools were not required to test students after all, only staff. I did not share this with parents as it was no longer relevant as we had entered a new period of partial school closure anyway, but it meant that, until Monday, we still believed that we would not be required to test students in this way. I hope that explains that point more fully.

The Government has said that students can return to school after one negative test result has been received – although they have also made clear that such a test is not mandatory, but in the spirit of trying to keep everyone safe and hoping that the reopening of schools does not lead to a third peak of infection, they strongly advise all parents to give their consent to testing. They have also said that they want schools to organise a further two tests after this first test, with each test being three to five days apart. Their vision is that all of these tests will be done within a week and a half of March the 8th. This would require the school to organise, administer and complete 4350 tests in 8 working days – that is, over 500 tests a day. The Government also would like all students to be back in the classroom and learning in a focussed and uninterrupted way within a week of March the 8th. As you would expect of me, I agree wholeheartedly with this second point, but I cannot achieve this and test all the students three times. Therefore, we have taken the difficult decision to test all students (given parental consent) only once, which, to be clear, is still a huge undertaking in a school of this size. This way we can then re-admit the students back into the classroom as soon as possible, where they can focus on their studies again, hopefully, with no further disruption.

The reason that the Government would like all students to do three tests is because, after that, it is their intention to send home, via us, testing kits that the students can use to test themselves. Staff will also be regularly testing using these home kits. The Government believes that, by testing the students three times rather than just once, we will be teaching the students how to do the tests properly to ensure accuracy. As we do not have the capacity to do these tests three times, we are going to take extra care with the first test to ensure that the students understand how to do it. Also, before we send home the first home testing kits, we will make available a video for you and your children to watch together which, again, makes clear how to make sure that the swab is done correctly. We will contact you more about this nearer the time.

If you would like more than one supervised practice at doing a Lateral Flow Test before doing them at home, there are several local sites where you can book one without having any symptoms. A list of all such test sites in Kent can be found here:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/protect-kent-and-medway/test-and-trace/symptom-free-testing>.

Thank you to the majority of parents who have already given us consent for their child to be tested. If you have not yet done so, please could you do this now by following one of these links:

For parents:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn4w8AnvfkLrx7Ks0Fpplp8DWM-lz5uKI4MPbtLp3Ss6C5Yq/viewform>

Deal Road, Sandwich  
Kent CT13 0FA

Telephone: 01304 610000  
Fax: 01304 610100

Email: [admin@sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk](mailto:admin@sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk)  
[www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk](http://www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk)

For Years 12 and 13:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe0Bk62YftwHaeP3Z5Znz2xmVkiCBibXJWYUWDkpxBUgKJpEQ/viewform>

Similarly, if you have previously completed this consent form and have not given your consent, but have since changed your mind and would like your child to be tested after all, you can give your consent by using the links above again.

Here is a summary of the plan for the week beginning March the 8th:

Throughout the whole week, the students who are currently attending the Critical Worker/ Vulnerable Student provision may continue to do so. Those students (providing we have consent) will be tested on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of March.

- Monday the 8<sup>th</sup>:
  - All of Year 11 and Year 13 will be tested. Each student will be given a specific time slot for their test (see bottom of this letter) and will then need to go home again.
  - This will be a 'catch up day' for Years 10, 11, 12 and 13. This will allow the students to prepare for their return to school and catch up with any outstanding work from lockdown. If they have completed all the work set then I would suggest they study independently using websites such as Seneca Learning and/or BBC Bitesize.
  - Years 7, 8 and 9 are to continue to work remotely as they have been doing throughout this closure.
- Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup>:
  - Year 11 and 13 students with a negative test result return to school properly and will start normal lessons according to their timetable.
  - All of Year 10 and Year 12 will be tested. Each student will be given a specific time slot for their test (see bottom of this letter) and will then need to go home again.
  - This will be the second and final 'catch up day' for Years 10 and 12 – like Monday.
  - Years 7, 8 and 9 are to continue to work remotely as they have been doing throughout this closure.
- Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup>:
  - Year 10 and 12 students with a negative test result will join Years 11 and 13 and return to school properly and will start normal lessons according to their timetable.
  - All of Year 7 will be tested. Each student will be given a specific time slot for their test (see bottom of this letter) and will then need to go home again.
  - Years 7, 8 and 9 are to continue to work remotely as they have been doing throughout this closure.
- Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup>:
  - Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 continue in school.
  - All of Year 8 will be tested. Each student will be given a specific time slot for their test (see bottom of this letter) and will then need to go home again.
  - Years 7, 8 and 9 are to continue to work remotely as they have been doing throughout this closure.
- Friday the 12<sup>th</sup>:
  - Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 continue in school.
  - All of Year 9 will be tested. Each student will be given a specific time slot for their test (see bottom of this letter) and will then need to go home again.
  - Years 7, 8 and 9 are to continue to work remotely as they have been doing throughout this closure.
- Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>:
  - All years return, providing they have received a negative test result.

Any students who receive a positive test result must self-isolate according to standard regulations and let the school know straight away.

I dare say you may be wondering why we are keeping Key Stage 3 out all week. This is because we are taking a lot of support staff (Year Managers, other key pastoral staff, Teaching Assistants, etc) out of their normal jobs to do the testing and the school would not be able to function with any more than the four key exam years back in school – to do so would be a safeguarding issue. The Government

has said, and I agree, that we should prioritise the examination year groups. I do understand that this is tough on the younger students – but they will be back with us soon.

The testing process will not provide 100% protection. It is essential that we all continue to remain vigilant for symptoms and keep students who appear unwell at home until you are sure they are Covid-free. May I remind you that young people are the most likely of those with Covid-19 to be asymptomatic or to present with very mild symptoms. Please do be on the look out for headaches, aching joints/muscles or being generally off colour, as well as the classic symptoms of:

- a cough;
- a high temperature;
- the loss of the sense of smell/taste.

Meanwhile we, in school, will be doing everything we can to keep the school as Covid secure as possible. I will write again next week with a brief (unlike this letter!) overview of our expectations of the students on their return and what you, in return, can expect of us to keep everyone safe.

**By email, I have invited you to bring/send your child in for their test at a specific date and time.**

If you have more than one child here and have, therefore, been offered more than one appointment and they are travelling with you rather than independently, please feel free to bring them in together for one of the appointment slots at your convenience. Otherwise, it would help enormously if you could stick to your appointment slot as closely as possible please.

If you are bringing your child by car and are going to wait to take them home afterwards, please could you wait in the car. The students should report to the Sports Hall and all students (unless they are exempt) should wear a mask whilst inside school buildings. Similarly, if your child is going to come for their test via public transport, please remind them that they must wear a mask on their journey.

We really have been living through extraordinary times, during which, as a nation, we have shown amazing resilience – but especially this is true of our young people. I cannot wait to have them back so that I, and my colleagues, can continue to be inspired by them, which is why we all do this job in the first place.

With best wishes

Yours faithfully



Tracey Savage  
Headteacher