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Oakbank School



21st December 2021

Information - Returning to School in January and regarding Lateral Flow Testing

Apologies for sending this letter during the holidays but, as I am sure you are aware, circumstances around our return to school in January have changed and I didn't want to write to you until I was more certain about our plans for the New Year. Unfortunately, we are being given late guidance on plans for January

This letter will outline details about the start of term and also provide more information on lateral flow testing.

January Opening

INSET DAYS

In order to support the roll out of lateral flow testing, the government have provided schools with the facility of an additional INSET day to prepare and train staff for the testing procedures. We already have an INSET day planned for Monday January 4th 2021 and will now have an additional INSET day on Tuesday 5th January.

As part of the latest announcement, the Department for Education has also stated that only students in examination year groups should return for face to face teaching in the first week back. We have made the decision to only have Year 11 on site in the week beginning 4 January. All other students (Years 7-10) will follow their normal timetable remotely from home and information for each lesson will be available on Microsoft Teams. We currently plan to welcome back all year groups on site week beginning 11th January.

The start of term will therefore look like this:

Monday 4th January 2021 – INSET day: Staff Only

Tuesday 5th January 2021 – INSET day: Staff Only

Wednesday 6th January 2021 – Y11 in School, remote learning on Teams for Y7 – 10

Thursday 7th January 2021 – Y11 in School, remote learning on Teams for Y7 – 10

Friday 8th January 2021 – Y11 in School, remote learning on Teams for Y7 – 10

w/c Monday 11th January – All Year Groups in School

Key Worker Provision

We will, of course, be running key worker provision for children of key workers who are unable to support home learning on the 6th, 7th or 8th January. If your child requires access to this provision please let me know by emailing rbertrand@oakbank.anthemtrust.uk by Thursday 24th December.

Students will follow a normal school day (including their staggered starts and finishes), following the online learning all other students are accessing from home. They need to bring in their books and equipment. We would ask for your

support in providing a snack for your child for break time, packed lunch and a water bottle (unless they are Free School Meals, in which case lunch will be provided as normal).

Free School Meals

Our catering provider will be supplying food parcels for children in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 that are entitled to Free School Meals (Year 11's will get lunch at the school). The boxes will include a range of food items and will be available to collect from the school on Tuesday 5th January.

Please confirm your Free School Meal requirement by emailing Mrs Brightwell (sbrightwell@oakbank.anthemtrust.uk) by Thursday 24th December.

Lateral Flow Testing

The government has announced that schools will be able to carry out rapid testing of both students and staff. If managed properly, this can identify asymptomatic cases and limit the need for isolation for many potential contacts. We see this as a major step forward for enhancing our safety measures against this terrible virus and are extremely supportive of the measure in principle.

There are however, many unanswered questions at this stage and guidance is still being developed and finalised. Issues surrounding logistics, delivery of the kits, layout of the testing facility, recruitment of volunteers, PPE delivery and also when training will be provided to testing staff all still need to be clarified.

We will do all we can to ensure that we are able to deliver testing to staff and students on their return in the New Year but there is much to be put in place before we can achieve this and it is crucial we get this right. It may be that it takes us a little longer than the first day back after the holiday before testing can begin. I will ensure that you are informed throughout the process and if you have any questions as we developing our testing procedures please let me know.

In addition, I need to make it clear that the tests are an opt-in service and parents have the right to opt their child out of testing. We will seek your agreement for testing in due course but there will be no requirement for students to be tested.

If you are willing to volunteer to help us with the process of lateral flow testing, please email the school office (enquires@oakbank.anthemtrust.uk) and we will be in touch as soon as possible. Anyone with first aid or medical training and part of the online DBS service would be particularly helpful.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

This year has been an extremely challenging one for Oakbank but throughout students and staff have shown incredible strength and resilience. I know that they will use the qualities they have built in the last twelve months to make sure 2021 is the best year for Oakbank ever!

Finally, I would like to wish you the best Christmas you can have, given our current circumstances. I look forward to seeing everybody back in the first weeks of 2021!

Mr R Bertrand