



Our Ref: AGA/CHO

18 December 2020

Dear Parents

I had hoped that my final communication of the term could focus on celebrating the achievement of our pupils this term. However, I am sure you will have seen the Education Secretary's announcement today concerning a staggered start to schooling in January as well as the government's plans for schools to deliver rapid testing for Covid in January. I wanted to write to you with some initial information, although I know you will appreciate that these announcements have been made late in the term and with very little supporting information from government. More details can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/staggered-rollout-of-coronavirus-testing-for-secondary-schools-and-colleges>

Staggered start to school in January

The Secretary of State for Education has announced 'Secondary schools and colleges will operate a staggered return, offering all non-exam year groups full-time remote education, as close as possible to that which students would get in class, during the first week of term, with face-to-face education for all starting on 11 January'.

At the time of writing, we expect to see Years 11 and 13 in school week beginning 4 January 2021. Students in other year groups will receive remote education at home. The government has said that vulnerable students and children of critical workers will be expected to attend school in person.

Teachers will be in school and will deliver remote education through Google Classroom. The first lesson of every day will be a Google Meet and your daughter should be dressed appropriately and ready to attend this Google Meet by 8.30 in the morning. Subsequent lessons will follow the school timetable and either be posted on Google Classroom or will be a 'live lesson', depending on the topic to be taught. Please ensure that your daughter has a pen, paper and is sitting at a desk or table for the lesson. The school day will finish at 3.45pm for all year groups including 7 & 8.

If your daughter has problems accessing Google Classroom or cannot access online learning, please contact your daughter's Head of Year using the year group email. We will always do our best to support although resources are limited. If you have any safeguarding concerns, then please contact your daughter's Head of Year or refer to the safeguarding policy and resources on the school website.

A survey for you to complete if you believe that you are critical workers can be accessed via this [link](#). Please note that the government has not defined what a critical worker is in this announcement, but we expect it to be a more limited definition than key worker. Students in school are likely to be using computers to access materials on Google Classroom so your daughter will need to bring earphones.

Rapid testing in schools

The government has today (17 December) confirmed that all secondary schools and colleges in England will be able to test more of their staff and students in a round of free coronavirus testing from the first week of January.

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Headmistress: Mrs Andrea Gaunt BSc (Hons) NPQH

The round of testing will also help to tackle the one in three who have the virus but do not have symptoms, so could be spreading the disease unknowingly, and minimise disruption during the spring term by helping identify positive cases when pupils return to face-to-face education following the Christmas break.

As with the other announcement we await more information from the government. At this stage all I will state is that testing is optional and consent will be required from the student or parent.

Staying Safe

Next term our Covid health and safety risk assessment remains in place. Any testing regime will be in addition rather than instead of the measure we have put in place such as the one-way system, enhanced cleaning, year group bubbles and mask wearing. We thank the girls for their reliability in adhering to these measures because this is what has enabled school to continue over the last term. Please make sure your daughter is fully aware that the news about testing and vaccines does not mean we can stop measures such as social distancing and she will still need a face covering next term.

We would also remind all students but particularly our exam classes of the importance of minimising social contact over the next few weeks. Sadly, Covid has not gone away. I have seen how bitterly disappointed students are when they have to self-isolate especially when facing stressful exams. I would not want any of our Year 11s or 13s to have to miss more time in what will be a very important term so I strongly advise them to bear this in mind when planning activities over the Christmas holidays.

Tracking and reports

Many parents have been in touch with us to seek more advice on how best to support their daughters following tracking. Staff will be happy to provide this advice in the new term. Please remember that the Curriculum Booklets for each year group can be found online and these provide advice on how to support your daughter in her learning.

Newsletter

Finally, I am very proud to share the school newsletter with you. This celebrates all the great things Upton girls have achieved over the last term, despite all the challenges we have faced as a school community. This would not be possible without the hard work and commitment of our staff. I also want to thank you for your support of the school as well. Please enjoy reading the newsletter and encourage your daughter to make the most of every opportunity Upton offer her.

I wish you and your families a peaceful and a happy Christmas. May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the love of Joseph and Mary and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Mrs A Gaunt
HEADMISTRESS

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