



Dear Parents and Carers

WGS Newsletter (42) 01/03/2021
Year 8 - Returning to learning in school w/c March 8th

I am writing this extended newsletter to give you key information regarding welcoming all students back to school next week. I can confirm:

- Years 7-9 will return to lessons in school on Wednesday 10th March at 8.25am
- On arrival students short report to their 'village' tutor room
- Year 8 students with consent for the Lateral Flow Test will be given a time slot to visit school on Tuesday 9th March for their test
- It is a week B when we return
- Years 7-11 must wear full uniform and bring PE kit for PE lessons
- Students will have normal lessons from their return
- The restaurant will be open from Tuesday as usual for lunches
- Our two priorities are that the students and staff feel safe, and that students feel confident about their learning and meeting others again.

1. Helping students to feel confident about their learning and meeting others again

In September, we saw that the best way to help students with their learning and their mental health is to get back into school, get into the normal routines as soon as possible and to have a very positive start to lessons; that is what we will prioritise again. Teachers are returning to work together this Friday and next Monday and we will use these days to plan for a really good start to lessons. This does mean that there will be independent work set at home rather than Teams lessons, where the student will have the option of when to complete the work set and not just in the allotted hour for the lesson. One feature of remote learning is that it is harder to assess how well each student is learning, so teachers will take time to meet on Friday and Monday to share with colleagues where each class has got to in their learning and what to start with in the first lessons back, as well as get classrooms ready. Normal lessons will resume in school on the Wednesday for Year 8. You will find the daily programme for the next few days at the end of this newsletter to confirm what is happening each day. Please note if your child has been using Real School that the return to school is causing changes to this provision later this week. Mr Askew is contacting all Real School families separately. If this disruption causes serious issues for you, please contact Mr Askew and we will be able to help.

To help you to reassure your child, I can confirm:

- We will be planning for each class to have a fresh start, so students who feel behind for any reason should not worry.
- Teachers will not carry out lots of tests straight away; instead, over the next few weeks, teachers will learn more about where students are in their learning and what needs to be a priority.
- We will then create our Learning Plan for the rest of this year and next year, which we will use the government catch-up funding to support.
- All students will have a tutor time on their first day back focussed on returning to school well
- Our usual student and pastoral support workers and school counsellor will be on hand to support tutors, Heads of Year and teachers.

2. Helping staff and students to feel as Covid-safe as possible

To ensure that students and staff feel as safe as possible, we will continue with the many changes, known as 'systems of controls' that we put in place for the return to school last September. These include: being in villages, staggered lunches and regular hand washing. Two very significant controls will be added or changed: testing and masks.

Covid Testing

If you have given consent for your child to take part in the regular Covid testing, you will receive in the next few days, a time slot on Monday (years 10-13) and Tuesday (years 7-9) for your child to visit school for their first Covid test. In this invitation you will get full information about where to go and what will happen. We have many volunteers, staff and older students on hand to make the process run smoothly. Given the size of the challenge of testing the school inside two days and the disruption with students visiting school throughout the day, we will not be running live lessons on these days. This is set out in the daily programme below. Students should arrive on time for their test. At the end of the process, students will return straight home. There may be some waiting involved and we do ask all students to remain 2m from everyone and to wear a mask when they come for their test. I expect of course that all students will follow these measures sensibly to help the process. In your invitation to the test, you will find details about how you get the result. This is managed by the National System, but if anyone does have a positive test, we will contact home immediately ourselves.

Once students are back in school, they will have two further Covid tests over the next fortnight. After this we believe that we will have given testing kits to send home. More will follow about this nearer to the time; the initial priority is to get through the first test.

Masks

The new government advice is that all students will wear masks in lessons, as well as round the site and we will be following this guidance. This new mask approach will help staff and students to feel more secure and full support from home is required to support this new measure. Therefore, all students need to have a good supply of masks and are expected to follow this rule without argument, unless they are exempt.

Some students can be exempt from wearing a mask. The guidance says that exemption is for those who:

- cannot wear a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health reasons
- speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate
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We would like parents who wish their child to be exempt from wearing a mask to confirm this, using the home-school agreement at the end of this letter. We have taken a non-confrontational approach to managing mask wearing throughout the pandemic. This approach has worked well so far: students have responded to being trusted and those who are exempt have felt respected. We plan to continue with this approach. This means that we will ask other students and staff not to challenge those exempt from wearing a mask and to respect their privacy, but we will ask everyone else to wear their mask. If a student is not following this new rule and is not exempt, we will contact home to discuss with you the issue of non-compliance with our mask policy.

Teaching in a mask is challenging and there will be some circumstances where teachers will need to teach without a mask, for example if a student has a hearing impairment. Therefore students will need to understand that their teacher may not be wearing a mask (although the students are required to)

and to accept this without challenge. Teachers will sometimes wear masks to teach. If you discover that any of this is challenging for your child, please let your child's tutor know.

It is so important that we all return to school and follow the Hands, Face, Space message. With this, our villages, and the changes to mask wearing and testing, we know we are doing all we can to make school feel as safe as possible for everyone.

Other important messages:

Laptops: If you borrowed a school laptop during lockdown, please ensure that your child returns this on the first day of full taught lessons when they return to school. The laptop should be taken to the main school reception. We lent out approximately 150 laptops during lockdown, including some kindly donated by the amazing Witney Access to Learning beyond School group. We now need these back in school to continue to benefit our students.

What to do next

Below is a link to a short Home-School Mask Agreement that we would like every family to complete before their child returns to school next week. This just confirms that we are all supportive of working together to make everyone feel safe, and to respect those needing to not wear masks.

[Please complete the Home-School Mask Agreement here](#)

Also below is a schedule of the next few days to show what your child is doing. We know that live learning will be less regular in the very last days, but we know that you will understand that this is necessary in order to prepare the best return to school and carry out our first mass testing. Please look through it carefully so that you and your child knows what to expect each day.

Later this week, we will update our full guidance on our website, with more information about extra-curricular clubs, changing rooms etc. The full government guidance can be found here:

[Schools coronavirus \(COVID-19\) operational guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Finally thank you to families who have sent such lovely messages to school throughout lockdown, to those who have volunteered to help with testing and to everyone for being such a great community. We know there is a long way to go yet, but with everyone helping to keep each other safe, we can ensure that the return to school is successful for students, staff, families and the community.

Yours sincerely



Mr R Shadbolt
Headteacher

- See below for the schedule of returning to school

Schedule for the Return to School Year 8

		Year 8 Remote Learning	Year 8 Real School
Wed	3rd Mar	Normal Lessons	Normal Lessons
Thurs	4th Mar	Normal Lessons	Normal Lessons
Fri	5th Mar	Independent learning set for lessons	No Real School - independent learning at home
Mon	8th Mar	Independent learning set for lessons	No Real School - independent learning at home

Tues	9th Mar	Covid Testing Day- students who signed up will be invited to school. No live lessons; complete any work before return to school	
Wed	10th Mar	Return to school	Return to school
Thurs	11th Mar	Normal lessons	n/a
Fri	12th Mar	In school + Covid Testing 2	n/a
Mon	15th Mar	Normal lessons	n/a
Tues	16th Mar	In school + Covid Testing 3	n/a