



Pittville School Cheltenham

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Headteacher Richard Gilpin

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Dear Parent/Carer

I hope this letter finds you and your family well and that you managed to have a relaxing Christmas. Further to my letter dated 18th December I am writing to update you on the plans for providing testing at school during the week commencing 4th January. At the time of writing the plans for testing are still being developed by the government. We have been told that the tests will arrive in school on Monday 4th January.

The overarching goal is to help to keep staff and students in school. However, and as is the case now, where a 'positive' case is identified, that member of staff or student would need to isolate for up to 10 days. The rapid-result tests are also known as 'lateral flow' tests and produce a result in 30 minutes. They do not require a laboratory to process, unlike the more common PCR tests. The Government believes that, in the main, secondary-aged students can self-administer, under the supervision of an adult.

Anyone who has a 'positive' test result from having taken a rapid-result test in school will be sent home for a more-typical PCR test. Equally, anyone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19 and who has a negative result from a rapid-result test, will be required to self-isolate until, again, a PCR test has been taken.

The Government is keen to emphasise that testing is voluntary for both students and staff, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within schools. Even with this new development, all social distancing measures, including the wearing of face masks, will continue at school.

Following Government advice our plans are:

- Monday, 4th January. This was a planned inset day which will enable us to finalise our planning for rapid-result testing. This will also enable teachers to plan their 'blended' learning for the rest of the week. No remote learning will be set for this day.
- Between Tuesday, 5th January and Friday, 8th January, Year 11 only should attend school as normal.
- Between Tuesday, 5th January and Friday, 8th January, all other Year Groups (Years 7-10) will be taught remotely. This is part of the Government's request for a 'staggered' approach to the start of term. Please see our letter dated 18th December for further details. A copy of this can be found on the Coronavirus section of the school website.
- Where students in these year groups 7-10 are deemed vulnerable (including Education, Health and Care Plan) or within 'critical worker' families, then on-site provision will be available if needed for these four days. Please complete the Edulink form to request a place if you have not already done so.
- Free School Meal families will continue to receive their vouchers
- On Tuesday, 5th January, students in Year 11 will take a rapid-result test, subject to parental/carers consent being given. This is one of two tests required, three days apart. The intention will therefore be to re-test these students on Friday, 8th January.



- From Monday, 11th January, all students will be back at school and the focus will be on students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 receiving the rapid-result tests, three days apart. Further details will follow during the week beginning 4th January.

Please complete the Edulink form stating whether or not you provide consent for your child/ children to receive lateral flow, rapid-result tests. The Government's view is that this is a test that, in most cases, students will be able to conduct themselves, with some direction, under adult supervision.

A note of caution

I outlined my concern about the last minute nature of these announcements in my letter dated 18th December. Obviously the national situation is changing all the time and we should all be prepared for changes to what has been outlined in this letter. The Government needs to ensure that :

- testing kits are delivered on time across all secondary schools in the country and
- schools have the capacity to oversee what is clearly going to be a challenging testing process coupled with a 'staggered' start to the term.

Thank you to parents/carers who have already offered help. If you are able to volunteer some of your time (the weeks commencing 5th January and 11 January) then we would love to hear from you. I know how busy people are but if you could indicate how much time you have available and when it would help us with our planning. Please complete the form on Edulink if you feel that you can and would like to get involved. I will, of course, inform you of any changes as we receive them. Watch this space!

In the meantime, may I wish you a very happy and safe 2021.

Your faithfully

R Gpin
Headteacher

