

Dear Parents/Carers,

As I am sure you are aware, the government announced yesterday that secondary schools in England must operate a staggered return to school in January to facilitate targeted coronavirus testing for staff and students. Whilst the decisions made and the timing of the announcements are outside of our control, we fully appreciate that such limited notice may make planning childcare arrangements, especially for younger students, particularly difficult. I would like to apologise for the very late notification of the changes to the start of the spring term and the inconvenience caused.

In light of the announcements, I am writing therefore to confirm the following arrangements:

- There will now be an **additional training day scheduled for Monday 4th January** which has been permitted to allow the school to plan the logistics, training and staffing which mass testing will involve. IGS will, therefore, only be open to students in year 11 who have scheduled mock examinations on this day.
- **Year 11 should arrive on site on Monday 4th January only for the start of their earliest exam.** For those who have Philosophy or IT in the morning at 8.30am, or French at 10.45am, they will be able to revise in the library until the afternoon exam which is English Literature; they must bring a packed lunch as **there will be no catering facilities on Monday 4th January.** For those whose first exam is English Literature, then students should arrive on site no later than 12:45pm as their exam starts promptly at 1pm.

NB: If your year 11 child is reliant on school transport and is unable to make their own way to school for a later start on Monday, they will be able to be supervised in the library to complete independent revision. Please let us know via admin@ilkleygs.co.uk no later than Wednesday 23rd December if this provision is required for your year 11 child.

For the rest of the week, **from Tuesday 5th January to Friday 8th inclusive, only years 11 and 13 who will sit all their exams this academic year will return to school for face-to-face teaching and, in the case of year 11, mock examinations. This is a directive from the government. Break and lunch catering facilities will be available from the 5th January for these year groups.**

- All of the year 11 mock examinations will go ahead as planned.
- **Students in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will access full-time remote education from Tuesday 5th January 2021 and will work from home for the rest of this week. They will return to school on Monday 11th January 2021 for face-to-face teaching on site.**
- **Year 12 students who are entered for the external exam in Health and Social Care on Friday 8th January will be able to come to school to sit the exam as scheduled.**
- **Vulnerable students and the children of key workers** who are unable to be supervised at home are also allowed to attend school from Tuesday 5th January 2021 where they will be supervised and will access the remote forms of education in line with their peers. Should your child be eligible and require on site supervision for this week, please complete the form [HERE](#) no later than Wednesday 23rd December. They will need to wear full school uniform and bring their equipment for the school day (including a fully charged iPad, portable charger and headphones); however, they do not need to bring PE kit during this week.

Please note that due to staffing and logistics, students in this group may be bubbled with students from other year groups. However, if this is the case students will be in larger spaces

and will be separated by at least 2 metres so they would not be judged to be a close contact in lessons in the event of a student testing positive for coronavirus.

- **We will provide food boxes for students eligible for Free School Meals who are working from home from Tuesday 5th January.** Please click [HERE](#) to register your details (if you haven't already filled in the form from the link above) and we will follow up with individual families in due course.

Remote Learning for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12

With regard to remote learning for non-exam years in the week from Tuesday 5th January 2021, lessons or part of a lesson will be delivered via Teams in line with students' timetables. Tutors will also check in with students in all years 7-10 at 8.30am every day. Lesson resources and scaffolds to support students will continue to be uploaded onto Showbie where students will complete work and receive feedback; in a small number of lessons, resources may be sent by email.

Students will receive an invite to Teams either in advance of the lesson or at the start (allowing for time for the teacher to set up) so students can connect easily to the call.

Unless a teacher is absent or undergoing testing on site, lessons will endeavour to start via Teams to set out the learning goals. Please note, live lessons will not necessarily be for the full period; sometimes, the live element/s will be the introduction of new content, more detailed explanations, modelling by the teacher or giving feedback, with students at other points in the lesson working independently. Once the register has been taken, the Teams channel can be used for students to ask questions and for teachers to deliver live feedback and support students with misconceptions.

Just a further reminder, that there are some timetable changes taking place after Christmas which will show on students' outlook calendars after the holidays:

- The current Thursday A period 1 will swap with the current Thursday A period 4
- The current Thursday A period 2 will swap with the current Thursday A period 3
- The current Tuesday B period 1 will swap with the current Tuesday B lesson 3
- The current Tuesday B period 2 will swap with the current Tuesday B lesson 4

Testing arrangements in the first week in January:

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to provide details on what the Covid testing will look like from January for staff and students. Guidance is due to be provided shortly to school leaders on how to set up and staff the testing sites, but like many schools we have concerns about how we are expected to have the capacity and expertise to carry out mass testing in school. Details which are currently available are as follows:

- Schools will be able to establish testing to offer students two rapid tests three days apart, with positive results confirmed by a lab-based PCR test. These are separate to serial testing for close contacts or routine weekly testing which is initially being introduced for staff.
- Students in years 11 and 13 who are attending face-to-face education in the first week of term will be offered the first rapid testing dates.

- Testing will be **optional** but strongly encouraged. Consent will be required from the student or a parent if the student is under 16.

Once fully set up, the testing programme will also provide additional serial lateral flow testing for staff and students if one of their close contacts tests positive. This will allow them to remain in school by taking a daily test in the morning at school for 7 school days, as long as the result (which takes around 30 minutes to process) is negative. A negative result from daily testing will therefore remove the need for an identified close contact to immediately self-isolate for 10 days as is the case currently.

The principles behind mass testing in schools are very much welcome: breaking the chains of transmission by identifying asymptomatic cases; allowing students who test negative to remain in school for face-to-face teaching and important social interaction with their peers; building on the range of measures which are already in place to keep staff and students safe; and helping to slow down the rates of infection. However, there are a number of logistical challenges from the establishment of a testing site in school which meets the key layout requirements to identifying and training the staff who will support testing. We certainly hope to be able to share more information after the holidays when it is available.

Once again, I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year and thank you for your support and understanding at what continues to be very challenging and unprecedented times.

Best wishes,

Carly Purnell
Headteacher