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Dear Parent/Carer

Return of Secondary Pupils from Monday 15 March

Further to my letter dated Friday 5 March on the next phase of schools reopening, I can now provide further information on the return of secondary pupils. Your child's school will send you further information outlining the days that your child will return to school between Monday 15 March and the Easter break.

Safety and wellbeing of young people and staff

The safety and wellbeing of our young people and staff remains our highest priority and as such we will continue to follow all government guidance. This includes putting in place a range of protective measures including limiting the number of young people who can return to school at this time and enhanced cleaning procedures.

All pupils and staff will be asked to follow the two-metre physical distancing guidance at all times, including when they are in classes. In addition, all young people will be asked to wear a face covering in classrooms and while moving around the school. Your child will also be offered the opportunity to take part in lateral flow at-home Covid testing. S4 to S6 pupils are being offered this right now and S1 to S3 pupils will be included in this after the Easter holiday period.

Timetabled phased return for young people until the Easter break

The requirement for everyone in school to observe physical distancing significantly reduces the number of young people who can be in school at any one time. Each school's layout and geography will also determine how many young people can safely attend school each day.

When planning a temporary timetable, all school will put in place similar models but there will be some differences as determined by each school's overall population, layout, geography and transport arrangements.

Schools will contact you with details of their arrangements and the days your child will be in school by the end of this week.

Priority will be given to S4 to S6 pupils to receive in-school learning to support their national qualifications. This is in line with government guidance.

A broad outline of days in school will be:

S1 to S3 Pupils in S1 to S3 will broadly be in school for one day during the first two weeks and for at least half a day in the final week. The day each week may be a full day or two half days.

S4 to S6 Pupils in S4 to S6 will broadly have the opportunity to be in school for up to two days each week. Where possible this will be extended slightly. However, for some subject areas, where schools believe there is greater benefit, some of the learning may continue through a remote platform.

Secondary aged young people attending one of our special schools will be contacted directly by the school in order to advise of arrangements for returning to school.

Lunchtime

It is really important that schools try to minimise the movement of pupils around the school and it is recognised that lunchtime will create specific challenges. To overcome this, many of our schools have chosen to move to a half day model where pupils either finish at lunchtime and go home or arrive at lunchtime to be in school for the afternoon.

Transport will be arranged as necessary to take young people home at lunchtime and bring them in to school for afternoon sessions.

This will limit the number of children in school during the lunch break and support the overall protective measures in place to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff.

Schools will contact you directly on the arrangements for your child. All young people entitled to a free school meal will continue to have financial payments made up until the Easter break.

Remote learning

Remote learning will continue for all pupils when not in school. However, teachers will now have to balance their time between teaching those in school and supporting those learning at home. Please note that as teachers will now have in-school teaching commitments, remote learning will necessarily have less direct interaction and more recorded or self-directed activities during this period.

Priority will also need to be given to S4 to S6 pupils to support their national qualifications.

Transport

From 15 March 2021, secondary school pupils must keep one-metre physical distancing while on school transport. This is in line with physical distancing guidance on public transport. Physical distancing will significantly reduce the capacity of vehicles, however, we have plans in place to ensure all eligible young people will still have transport to school. Please also remember that all pupils must wear face coverings on designated school transport.

Key workers and vulnerable children

The hub in each school for key worker and vulnerable children and young people will continue for those pupils already registered and who still require a place. Your secondary school will contact you with specific details for your child as soon as possible. Thank you for your continued patience and support as our young people return to school.

Return of all pupils

All pupils are expected to return to full-time schooling after Easter (Monday 19 April), subject to continued suppression of the virus and the requirement for two-metre physical distancing between young people being removed.

Yours sincerely



Steven Quinn
Director of Children's Services