



## BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Acting Headteacher: Ms Linda McQuone BSc(Hons), MA(Ed), PGCE, NPQH, MCCT

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December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020

Dear parents and carers,

### Returning to school

I hope that all of our students and families have had a relaxing and enjoyable Christmas break. I'm delighted and relieved that there were no outbreaks reported in the school community over the holiday.

Before the end of last term, I explained to you that there would be changes to the usual January return. At approximately 4pm yesterday, the Education Secretary announced that secondary aged pupils (our Year 7s and Year 8s) will return from January 18<sup>th</sup>, not the 11<sup>th</sup>. The government's stated aim is that this will allow schools more time to plan for the roll-out of testing to break chains of transmission and make it safer to return to school. Our Year 6 students will still return on January 4<sup>th</sup> as planned, along with children of key workers. Children not being educated in school will access remote learning, as outlined in my letter to you during the last week of term.

Our community is now in Tier3. Although rates of infection are lower in Wychavon (219 per 100 000) than they are in the West Midlands (273) and lower than England (400), they are 40% up in the last week and Worcestershire Public Health team believe it is likely that the new variant strain of the virus is in the county already. This new variant appears to spread more quickly in school-aged pupils. We fully support the new measures to protect our community.

We have yet to receive clarity about what the government expects in terms of rapid mass-testing in school. As soon as we have the equipment and training, we will begin the weekly testing of staff using the lateral flow tests in school. We envisage that this will be rolled out to students once we have the full guidance, although at present I can't give any more details. It seems likely that we will need volunteers to support us if we are to run any mass testing program. Please contact me directly on lmcquone@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk by 9am on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January if you think you might be able support the school. This will enable us to determine what we can offer and to plan accordingly.

We will also be reviewing the other preventative measures that we have in place. I will let you know if any changes are made.

If your child is returning on Monday 4<sup>th</sup>, please make sure that there are not showing any symptoms of ill-health. Even minor symptoms might be a sign of COVID-19: waiting for a day or two and taking NHS advice would be very sensible. Please also note that children attending during the week commencing January 4<sup>th</sup> will not be required to wear uniform. A cold weather snap is predicted, so children should wear warm clothes and footwear suitable for undertaking PE lessons on timetabled days. Uniform requirements for the following week will be decided based on weather forecasts and communicated to you in due course.





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All children in school will be expected to wear face coverings in corridors and other communal areas, so please ensure that your child has a suitable mask.

I'd like to take the opportunity of wishing you a very happy New Year - I'm confident that 2021 will bring us the normality that we are longing for.

Kind regards,

Linda McQuone  
Acting Headteacher

