



BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

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

Station Road, South Littleton, Evesham
Worcestershire, WR11 8TG
Telephone: 01386 830311
office@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk
www.blackminster.worcs.sch.uk

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Dear parents and carers,

This letter is to update you on our plans for reopening to all students during the week commencing March 8th. These are subject to change as we get more information and guidance, but at present the situation is as follows.

COVID testing for students

The government has moved towards asking parents to test secondary aged children (i.e. those in Years 7 and 8) at home twice a week. Testing will enable people who are carrying the virus without symptoms, who therefore might not realise that they are infectious, from unwittingly spreading it. Schools are expected to offer children three tests in school before they are issued with home kits – the idea is to train children how to swab correctly (under staff supervision) before sending kits home. The DfE would like children to be offered the tests on their return to school, and would also like to make sure, if possible, that children don't return to classrooms until they've had at least one negative test.

We are proposing to offer **Year 7 and Year 8** children **an appointment next week**. They will be invited in at a specific time to get a test, and will then return home. This will take place on **Wednesday for Year 8**, and **Thursday for Year 7**. Consent forms have already been sent home, and appointment times will be sent to those who have given consent by text message on Monday 1st.

Year 8 students will then start back on **March 8th (along with Year 6)**, and have another test that day; **Year 7** will start back on **March 9th** and have their second test that day. **The third test** will then take place on **Thursday 11th for Year 8** and **Friday 12th for Year 7**, and home testing kits will be issued on or shortly after March 15th.

I need to make it clear that testing is not compulsory, but I'd very strongly encourage everyone to take part to protect the whole community. As a school we have been very fortunate to have avoided outbreaks and bubble closures so far, and I'd like very much for that to continue!

Students' returning

As mentioned above, **Year 6 and Year 8** will return to lessons on **March 8th**, and **Year 7** on **March 9th**.

March 8th is Week B on the timetable.





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The risk management measures that will be in place will be very much like those that have been operating since September (with a few differences around masks – please see below). There will be lots of handwashing and sanitising; students being encouraged to keep a safe distance; enhanced cleaning regimes and separation on the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 “bubbles”.

We will provide remote learning, in line with what is being covered in school, for children who need to be at home self-isolating.

Masks

Students in all year groups and staff are strongly encouraged to wear masks in classrooms if distancing cannot be maintained. This policy will be reviewed at Easter. Please make sure that your child has a supply of masks and a small plastic bag for storage. We won't be able to issue masks to students except in emergencies.

Uniform

We will expect children to be back in uniform, but students are asked to wear PE kit on PE days to avoid using changing rooms.

Students' mental health

There is no doubt that a lot of children (and some adults!) have found this lockdown very hard. However, I also firmly believe that the doom-mongering in some areas of the media about “a lost generation” and “mental illness pandemics” is doing our children a tremendous disservice. Young people are resilient – they have amazing abilities to bounce back – and just being in school, with its routines, clear expectations and friendship support will be huge tonic for most of our students. Pastoral care is a strength of Blackminster, and we have support mechanisms that can swing into action quickly if necessary, but the priority for staff is going to be to find out where students are educationally, physically and emotionally, and then do what we do best – move them on! We're very much looking forward to being back on our lovely site so that we can do so.

With very best wishes,

Linda McQuone

Linda McQuone
Acting Headteacher

