



31st December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I really hope that you and your loved ones are in good health and have been able to enjoy the holiday despite the changing global situation regarding the pandemic.

For so many, plans had to be changed and I understand that for many families, anticipated trips to see more family members were unable to go ahead. However, I do hope this did not detract too much from any festivities.

Thank you for your continued support as we navigate a rapidly changing situation regarding the pandemic.

Start of term:

If you have been following the news this week, you will not be surprised that I am writing to inform you about a change of plan for the start of the Spring Term 2021.

Yesterday evening, the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, confirmed the following in a statement to the House of Commons:

- **Years 11 and 13** will start online learning on **Tuesday 5th January 2021**. They will return to the Academy site on **Monday 11th January 2021**. This is one week later than had been planned.
- **Years 7-10 and 12** will start online learning on **Monday 11th January 2021**. They are currently expected to return to the Academy site in the week beginning **Monday 18th January 2021**. This is one week later than had been planned.
- **Vulnerable Students and the children of Critical Workers** are able to return from **Tuesday 5th January 2021**. Thank you to our parents/carers of our Year 7 who have already completed the Google Form sent at the end of last term to identify that they are critical workers and their child will need supervision at the Academy. We already have records of children in other year groups who are children of critical workers or who are classed as being vulnerable in Years 8-13 from Lockdown 1 and will be contacting those families to establish whether your child will need to attend the Academy from **Tuesday 5th January 2021** at the start of next week. If you have any questions regarding this, please email advice@rivers-aspirations.org. If your child is attending, please pre-order lunch as usual using our online system. Please note that any students attending the Academy must wear full uniform and bring their face mask with them.



Mass testing:

The tests have not yet arrived and we are expecting them on **Monday 4th January 2021**. As I am sure you will understand, training needs to take place for the staff conducting the tests and the logistics of arranging well over 1100 tests (taken twice by everyone) also needs careful planning. You will receive further information about the testing process including information about the consent that is required as soon as possible.

We are hopeful that we will be able to do both the initial test and the repeat test for Years 11 and 13 between **Monday 11th and Friday 15th January 2021**. Depending on our experience of conducting these tests, it may be possible that the return for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 will need to be phased during the week beginning 18th January 2021. I will write to you nearer the time when the logistics of this have become clearer.

In the meantime, the start of the term will see all the students return to 'online' learning. Those students in need of supervision who are booked in to return on **Tuesday 5th January 2021** will be supervised, completing the same work as their classmates.

The Secretary of State also indicated that the external assessments being taken by vocational students in the 6th Form in January will still go ahead as planned. We are keen that this does not adversely affect any Year 12 students with external assessments and we will be making arrangements for these students to have some revision sessions in the week beginning **Monday 4th January 2021**.

During the initial weeks of term, our canteen will be offering a reduced service to those students who are in the Academy. If there are any students who are eligible for free school meals but are not going to be in school, there is still the opportunity to order a sandwich/baguette at lunchtime. This would need to be collected between 11am and 1pm.

I am sorry for any inconvenience this delay to a proper return may cause you and your families. The government has said they will continue to review the situation and let us all hope that the spread of the new variant of COVID slows down in the coming weeks. The roll out of vaccinations does at least give us something to be optimistic about.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year. Let us hope that 2021 brings us further good news on the horizon.

Yours sincerely,

Andria Singlehurst

Principal