



Dear Parents,

Apologies in advance that this is a long communication with lots of information included. Reopening school after this lockdown and new Covid-19 testing plans has meant considerable amounts of detail that I must make you aware of in advance. I would appreciate if you could take some time to read this through and to talk over the key points with your children.

I would like to start by saying how important it is for both parents and teachers to work together to try to make the return to school as positive an experience for the children as possible. I know that many are looking forward to seeing friends in person and engaging with teachers away from a screen! To that end, we shall be encouraging staff where possible to slow the academic pace down a little in the early stages after the return to school, in order to facilitate re-connection, conversation and create time for reflection. We are also acutely aware that the return to school will cause anxiety for some and are very conscious of the potential for longer term issues that may surface over time as a result of the disruption caused by Covid-19. We are working to ensure that staff are trained to identify and support mental health issues where needed and please do let us know if you have concerns at any stage.

Risk Assessment

This live document is constantly updated as changes occur – you can find the most up to date version [here](#) which reflects new government guidance and expectations of schools.

Arrangements for Monday 8th / Tuesday 9th March

Junior School – parents have already received a communication direct from Mr Miller, but in short we are looking forward to welcoming Y3-Y6 back to school at the usual time and will be straight back into routine.

Senior School – to accommodate mass Covid-19 Testing for students there will be a short phased-return. The document **attached** details the way this will work, arrival times and arrangements for transition from remote learning to face to face teaching. We appreciate that these arrangements will be challenging for families and particularly for those who have children in different year groups who may end up having to make multiple journeys into school. If that is too difficult you, for example if you live a long way from school, we please ask that you arrive at the latest time specified for your children. Thank you in advance for your patience and support of this; it is a significant logistical exercise for a school of our size to deliver at speed and plans have only been made possible by the wonderful amount of volunteer support from the parent body.

Vulnerable / Keyworker Children Y7-Y9:

Those children in Y7 - Y9 who have been accessing our on-site supervision during lockdown are still able to come on-site on Monday and Tuesday morning, ahead of their

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allocated test slot. They should come on-site using the Pillar Gates and entering via the Main Reception at any time between 8.00am to 8.45am. They will register and have a temperature check at Main Reception and then will proceed to the Main Hall to wait there. They should wear their normal school uniform, and bring a device, along with headphones, to allow them to get on with their classwork. If they are in Y9 then they should wear school PE kit on Monday, as they will have Games on Monday afternoon. If the students have a single PE lesson on Monday, then they don't need to bring kit, and instead can do the prescribed activity later at home. At the end of the school day, they will leave via Main Reception if departing before 4pm and via Brandling Reception if leaving after 4pm. Should you require it, late room will run in the Dining Hall from 4pm-5.45pm. Please complete the booking Form as usual [here](#).

Mass Testing - Advance Preparation

Please remember that while we strongly encourage students to take part in Covid-19 Testing, this is not compulsory.

The slowest part of the process of Lateral Flow Testing for Covid-19 is not the actual test itself: this is remarkably quick once you know how. [Here](#) is a reminder on how to carry out a Lateral Flow Test, I would be grateful if you could spend some time talking to your children about this, so they are prepared for what they need to do. At the same time, please do reassure them that whilst it is a little uncomfortable until you are used to it, it is certainly not difficult or anything to worry about, and that they will be supported in school throughout.

The long bit of the testing process is registering for a test and identifying where results should be sent! *For this initial test, I please ask that parents / students register for their first test in advance of arrival - you can do this on the morning of the test.* The process for doing that will be sent to you by email before the weekend and will include the unique bar code information you will need to register the individual Lateral Flow Test that each of your children will be taking. We would advise that you do set up an NHS account when prompted, because that saves time for future tests. Your help with this will be much appreciated as registering on the day significantly slows our ability to test students quickly.

I politely remind you of the need to complete the testing consent form [here](#) before return to school if you would like your children to take part.

Home Covid-19 Testing

As soon as we have completed the initial three Lateral Flow Tests with students in school, they will subsequently be issued with kits to continue testing themselves at home with your support. These will be issued during the week beginning March 15th and further information is to follow on this.

You may also have seen in the news that home testing kits are also available for families of students in school. The information we have from the Department of Education in this is:

"On Sunday 28 February, the Department of Health and Social Care announced that from Monday 1 March, households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare

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and support bubbles, can test themselves twice every week at home as schools return from Monday 8 March. Households, childcare and support bubbles of primary, secondary and college staff can also be tested. Twice-weekly testing will also be offered to adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after school club leaders. The twice-weekly test kits can be accessed:

- *via employers if they offer testing to employees*
- *at a local test site*
- *by collecting a home test kit from a test site*
- *by ordering a home test kit online*

Schools should not give test kits to parents, carers or household members and should not order more test kits for this purpose. Letters containing advice on where to access testing will be made available for schools to share with parents and staff shortly."

As soon as we have this information, we will pass it on to you.

Routine Changes (from Tuesday 9th March onwards)

Before Christmas it was agreed with the School Council that we would make some adjustments to Senior School departure times, to make sure that it was a fair distribution of times over the course of the year.

The new times for those leaving school at the end of lessons are:

Exit window 1 - 3.30pm – 3.40pm

- Y12 via Reception
- Y13 via Pillar Gate or Church Gate

Exit window 2 - 3.40pm – 3.50pm

- Y7 via Church Gate (released class by class)
- Y8 via Reception (released class by class)
- Y11 via Church Gate (released class by class)

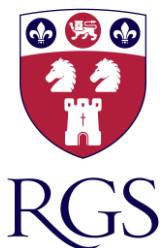
Exit window 3 - 3.50pm – 4.00pm

- Y9 via Reception (released class by class)
- Y10 via Church Gate (released class by class)

There are no changes to arrival times, no changes to the arrangements for Junior School departure, and no changes to the late room facility (which closes at 5.45pm).

Return to school student details and safeguarding update:

Please complete a quick pastoral survey available [here](#) for each of your children who attend our School. It will allow us to understand any significant changes that may have occurred during their time away from school and allow us to be as prepared as possible to support them on their return.



Finally, can I remind everyone that one of the precautions we have to employ to reduce risk of transmission of Covid-19 is good ventilation of rooms in school. At this time of the year this can make the school very cold – please encourage children to bring in a coat or jacket to wear over the school uniform to stay warm during the day. Please also make sure that each child has a number of face coverings that they can use each day; for obvious reasons, these need to be changed regularly.

Apologies again for such a large volume of information, but I hope that this gives you a sense of the efforts we are making to follow government guidance whilst also being as sensitive as possible to everyone's needs. I hope also that you are reassured by that, but if you do have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch via communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk.

With best wishes,

Mr Tom Keenan
Deputy Head