

TLA / GPA

2nd March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Return to School from 8th March

Further to my letter of last week, I am now writing to provide more detail of our plans to return students safely to school from Monday 8th March. Thank you for your patience whilst we worked on our strategy. There were a number of possibilities to consider, including an offer of support with testing from the Local Authority, which some schools are pursuing, but we have decided to manage all asymptomatic testing of students on our own site, which we felt would be more convenient for all concerned. In order to make this possible, we had to ensure that we had sufficient personnel available to meet the demands of the schedule, which took a little time, and I am very grateful to those members of our community who have volunteered to support us with this sizeable operation.

The DfE guidance makes it clear that we should stagger the return of students to allow for testing to take place. This letter sets out the timetable for the return of students to Alec Hunter and also gives some key safety information. Please read it carefully and discuss it with your child.

Testing prior to returning to school

All students are strongly encouraged to take part in the testing programme. Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests will help us to identify asymptomatic cases and ensure that those affected self-isolate to help keep the school and wider community safer and reduce the risk of disruption to in-school education.

The current guidance is that all students should take 3 supervised tests in school, before then moving to a system of self-testing at home, supervised by parents. The first test should take place before students resume lessons in school, with the second test being taken 3-5 days later and the final test taking place 3-5 days after the second.

The on-site testing programme for staff and students attending the key worker/vulnerable student provision has been running very successfully for the past month. The self-administered test is both quick and efficient and is overseen by our lovely team of friendly, trained parent volunteers and staff. We are already holding consents for the majority of students currently coming into school, but **we now need parents of all other students who have not yet provided consent to do so by the end of this week (Friday 5th March).** Please follow the link below to do this.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wKKVA7NcKEKdW86vFszRziA8YYEkCYVErmAgl3KcMedUNIY5M1FHTkxNM1hMNzFJUvBBOEFEOFBMVi4u>

To assist you further, please find attached additional guidance, as well as our privacy notice, which we hope will answer some of your questions.

Please be reassured that testing is not mandatory. A test will not be carried out on any student for whom a completed consent form has not been received and they will still be permitted to return to school. However, **we do feel strongly that testing all students regularly will help us to keep infection rates low within the community and reduce the chance of further significant**

disruption to education, which I'm sure is something we would all hope to avoid. To notify us that you do not give consent for your child to undertake a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test, please complete the short form via the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wKKVA7NcKEKdW86vFszRziA8YYEkCYVErmAgl3KcMedUMFQ1SEVYVE9UOTQwUk9XNUM2OVJVRDdPNS4u>

If you have given consent for testing but at any time you wish to withdraw it, please email Miss Gill Partridge at GPartridge@alehunter.com

Dates and timings of first tests and return to school for each year group

To allow the first tests to take place before each year group returns, we will be running the following timetable for return to school:

Year Group	Date of first test (students must only attend to take their test and then leave the site immediately on this date)	Date of full return to school
Year 11	Monday 8 th March (morning)	Tuesday 9 th March
Year 10	Monday 8 th March (afternoon)	Tuesday 9 th March
Year 7	Tuesday 9 th March (morning/early afternoon)	Wednesday 10 th March
Year 8 (H, U and N)	Tuesday 9 th March (afternoon)	Wednesday 10 th March
Year 8 (T, E, R and A)	Wednesday 10 th March (morning)	Thursday 11 th March
Year 9	Wednesday 10 th March (late morning/afternoon)	Thursday 11 th March

We will send a further letter with instructions and more precise timings for these first tests for each tutor group before the end of the week. **On the day of their first test, students may only come into school for the short period required for the test to be taken and should then go straight home.**

The second tests will start from Thursday 11th March and will take place during the school day. Students will be withdrawn from lessons as a group to do this so taking part will not result in them getting behind in their learning.

After each test, your child will be given a card to take home which will have a QR code and a barcode on it. They will also have written instructions on how to register the test so that you receive the result from the NHS service. In order to access this service, each test must be registered within 24 hours. In the event of a positive test, students will need to self-isolate and their close contacts will be traced. We will issue more information about home testing nearer the time.

Remote Education in the week beginning March 8th

Prior to the return date for your child, **remote education will continue**. The only exception will be that **no work will be set during the initial testing slot for each year group**, as we do not want students to get behind or feel anxious about missing out on anything by taking the test.

After the return date for their year group, it is expected that students attend school in the usual way, with attendance returning to being mandatory. Remote education will cease, except for those needing to self-isolate owing to testing positive for Covid-19, or where a student has been identified as a close contact and is asked to self-isolate.

ALEC HUNTER ACADEMY Stubbs Lane, Braintree, Essex CM7 3NR.
t: 01376 321813 f: 01376 326839 e: admin@alehunter.com w: www.alehunter.com

Safety in School

Safety measures that were in place last term will remain in place. These include:

- 1) Ensuring that those with symptoms are not in school and that they seek a PCR test
- 2) Staggering of breaks, lunchtimes and the end of the school day
- 3) The zoning of the school and our eating outlets at breaks and lunchtimes
- 4) Additional cleaning, especially of high frequency touch points, changing rooms and toilets
- 5) The regular use of hand sanitiser or hand washing including on arrival at school, at the start and end of each lesson, and the promotion of “catch it, bin it, kill it” approaches.
- 6) Ventilation of all spaces, in line with the guidance
- 7) A one-way system of movement around the school
- 8) Alterations to lesson activities, in line with the guidance
- 9) Masks to be worn in all corridors and communal spaces

New, additional safety measures

Our students responded really well to the measures in place last term and this helped to keep the school community safer. However, levels of the virus remain high and new variants are more transmissible and so it is vital that all students continue to be vigilant, especially around avoiding touching each other and sharing equipment etc.

We will also be bringing in additional safety measures as set out by the Department for Education:

- 1) Providing support and encouragement for students to be involved in the regular testing programme.
- 2) Requiring the wearing of face masks **in classrooms** as well as in corridors. The guidance states that this is an “additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point.” **Please therefore make sure that your child has two masks** with them each day so that they can follow the guidance and replace any damp masks promptly. They should also have a plastic bag for the safe storage of reusable masks.

We are aware that some members of our community disagree with these measures. However, as these are set out by the government, please could you direct any complaints or Freedom of Information requests on these issues to the Department of Education and not to us here at school, as we are already stretched quite thinly, and we are required to adhere to these externally set rules.

How can parents help?

As well as providing consent for testing, it will be useful if you can discuss the contents of this letter with your child and remind them of the importance of following national guidelines both in school and in the community. We feel that our safety measures are robust, including the separation of year group bubbles, and that testing will help us to identify asymptomatic positive cases more swiftly, but these efforts will be undermined if students are mixing and ignoring Covid rules at the evenings and weekends, so please do all you can to uphold these expectations for the good of the school and wider community. It would help us if you could check that your child knows how to put on and remove a facemask safely and also that they have a plastic bag to put their facemask in when they remove it for PE lessons, eating, and at the end of the day. If they are able to bring their own bottle of hand sanitiser to school, it will also facilitate a smooth start to lessons with fewer delays.

Student well-being

We hope that the spring weather and the news that they will soon be back to a more normal school experience and have further in-person contact with their friends will help our students to feel both calm and positive. It has been a long journey and there may still be bumps in the road ahead, but we have come such a long way and the vaccine programme should mean a return to a more normal way of life in the not-too-distant future. However, we are aware that the last 12 months have been difficult for many of our students. There has been considerable uncertainty and also worry about loved ones. If your child is feeling that they may need some additional support and care on their return to school, please do let their Head of Year or Student Support Leader know.

We would also like to emphasise how well students have done in keeping on top of their work whilst working from home. They have developed skills of independence and resilience which will help them in the future, and they should feel very proud of their achievements so far. Please encourage them to keep going for the next two weeks as they will then return to school having achieved a huge amount and with a solid platform on which to build toward further progress.

As always, stay safe, and many thanks for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely,



Mr T. Lawn
Headteacher