



Finding Pathways to Learning & Living

Derrymount School

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Charity Number: 1116073

Thursday 31 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As many of you will be aware, Nottinghamshire has now been placed into the Tier Four Covid-19 response level. In addition, the Secretary of State also announced the reopening of school and mass testing of secondary aged pupils yesterday afternoon as well as testing for all staff.

Both of these events mean that we have now revised our plans for the week commencing 4th January 2021. We wanted to write as soon as possible to share with you our revised plans. I know that last minute changes are unhelpful, so please accept my apologies, but I am sure you will understand why this is the case.

I have also been able to speak with all other Nottinghamshire special school heads teachers to share our thinking and explore all possible options. I believe we have reached a shared understanding of what we need to do to keep children in our Special Schools as safe as possible.

Mass Testing in Special Schools

As a school we **will** be signing up to the national mass testing programme. This is because we believe this will help to keep your children as safe as possible and the school open. There is a lot for us to put in to place and we need time to do this properly. In line with the government's guidance we think it is sensible to offer staff testing. We think this is best done **before** all pupils return to school. The majority of pupils **will not** be in school next week.

Firstly, we will offer mass testing (2 swabs, taken 3 days apart) to **all staff** and then to pupils/ students over the age of 11, who can administer the test themselves or with minimum levels of prompts and encouragement. We will also work with pupils/students who want to be tested, but cannot physically administer the test themselves, to agree a way forward.

No pupil/student will be forced to be tested and testing will not take place without parental consent. If your child is over 16 and has the capacity to make their own decisions, we will work with them and you to agree consent.

We need time to work with NHS partners to better understand the role they will play in the mass testing of pupils with SEND who are not able to test themselves, should this be an option in the days and weeks to come.

We believe that offering mass testing as a school is an additional way of helping us to reduce the risk of the virus in school and our wider communities.

Tier Four Restrictions

As a school in a Tier Four area, any member of staff or pupil considered to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), must now stay at home and access remote education. You will receive a letter or text message from the government alerting you of this fact.

Churchmoor Lane, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8HN, Telephone: (0115) 9534015, Fax: (0115) 9534025
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All other pupils will be expected to attend school from 11 January 2021. If you would like to discuss this with us, please contact school, so that we can agree a way forward, as in the previous versions of lockdown.

We will also be reducing the number of external visitors to school, in line with our own Covid-19 operational guidance.

Returning to School in January

The government has given flexibility to the reopening of special schools, to allow us to prepare for mass testing.

We are committed to opening our school as **safely** and as **soon** as possible. We have mass testing training and planning and new national guidance to implement, so the start of our new term will begin for pupils on Monday 11 January 2021. Clearly, if your child is CEV, then their education will be of a virtual nature from this point, whilst tier four restrictions are in place.

School will be open to the children of key workers and those we (parents and school) identify as being more vulnerable remaining at home than being in school on the 6, 7 and 8 January. Our aim is keep the number of pupils in school as low as possible for the week commencing 4 January, so we can as test many staff as possible.

The government has provided an additional INSET day for schools electing to roll out mass testing and as you will recall we already have an INSET booked for the 4 January 2021. This means that school will be closed to all pupils on the 4 and 5 January.

Monday 4 January	INSET DAY – Closed to all pupils Training for testing
Tuesday 5 January	INSET DAY – Closed to all pupils (Testing of staff begins – test one)
Wednesday 6 January	Critical worker children where childcare is necessary and vulnerable pupils only. Remote learning will take place for pupils at home.
Thursday 7 January	Critical worker children where childcare is necessary and vulnerable pupils only.
Friday 8 January	Critical worker children where childcare is necessary and vulnerable pupils only. Second test offered to staff.
From Monday 11 January	Open to all pupils, except pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable (to be reviewed when tier four changes)

Bubble Closures and Staffing

We will continue to monitor our staffing levels and make decisions about which classes are open on a daily basis. We will be open to all pupils, where it is safe to do so and there is sufficient staffing to maintain pupil safety. Here are the principles we continue to follow:

- Keeping the two sites separate except for members of the SLT and site staff.
- Try to maintain bubble, with its own staffing team;
- Pairing up classes and creating larger bubbles, so staff can be shared;
- Redeploy staff, wearing PPE, to cover where required;
- Working with local supply providers to identify high quality supply staff who could be allocated only to Derrymount.
- Reviewing risk assessments of most vulnerable pupils, that we would want in school fulltime because of external risk factors;
- Consider part time opening of bubbles (one week on and one week off) where staffing drops below the required number;
- Close individual bubbles where staffing drops below required number;
- Review need for whole school closure in conjunction with Governors.

We fully appreciate that this is late notice for you all. We apologise for that, however, I feel confident that we will be open for all pupils with a safe workforce on Monday 11th January. We very much look forward to seeing your children in the New Year. Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year

Cathy Clay
Head Teacher
Derrymount School