



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

31 December 2020

Start of term as normal on Monday 4 January

Dear Parents,

Yesterday the UK government issued guidance that secondary schools should delay opening in order to allow time for the government's testing system to be set up and implemented. Unlike other schools, we *already* planned to provide mass testing to all pupils and staff, with the first test being done on Sunday 3 January. We are therefore in the fortunate position of being able to start term at the original scheduled time, that is on **Sunday 3 January (for boarders) / Monday 4 January**.

I have received confirmation from *Medatest* that the tests we have issued are suitable for picking up the newer strain. To offer further reassurance, given the possible increased transmission of the new mutation, we will move immediately to **twice-weekly testing**, asking that pupils test themselves on Wednesday evening as well as on Sundays.

To keep the school open when others are not so fortunate requires us to take every possible precaution not to spread coronavirus, so please do not bring your child back into school if the lateral flow test is positive, if anyone in the family is feeling unwell or experiencing any of the classic three symptoms (temperature, loss of sense of taste or smell, or new persistent cough). If the test returns a positive result please let us know (ECCCOVIDtracking@eastbourne-college.co.uk) and book an NHS test to confirm the result. Pleasingly this regime means that even with a confirmed positive case we will no longer have to isolate close contacts provided they are tested daily for seven days, so the new system will prevent large numbers having to isolate, as well as being preventative, if we all play our part.

We apologise that some families have not received their *Medatest* envelope with two kits for each child at the College, which we believe is due to problems with the postal system over Christmas. If you are a day parent and did not receive your kits, or your kit delivered an inconclusive result, you can collect another test pack from Reception from 8am on Monday 4 January. You can then do the test in the car and return your child to school immediately on a negative result or you can take it home and return after a negative result later on Monday or on Tuesday morning. If you are unable to do this, then please contact the medical centre for advice. Boarding houses will have kits ready for testing on Sunday 3 January evening for any returning boarder needing a test.

If anyone is unable to return at the appointed time we will, of course, include them remotely in our learning. We continue to be mindful of managing the quarantine arrangements and needs of returning overseas pupils to ensure that they enjoy the best education possible and the safest and most comfortable arrangements.

Parents should be reassured that we will be keeping up robust control measures in school to reduce the risk of spread, including mask-wearing, hygiene measures and (initially) some changes to co-curricular activities. With this and our mass testing already in place which, by including all pupils, is more thorough than the recommended

government process, we will both ensure that the school can operate safely and the local community is protected. In these first two weeks when other schools in our age group are not back it is doubly important that we do all we can to keep to the strictest practicable measures.

With very best wishes for a happy new year,



Tom Lawson
Headmaster