



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

24 February 2021

Dear Parents,

I hope that you and your children are celebrating with me that the school return date on 8 March has been confirmed for all age groups. As I look out of the window at beautiful spring weather in Eastbourne, I imagine the green shoots of normality beginning to return to school life. I appreciate that overseas parents are unlikely to be able to take up this two-week remainder of the Lent term but at the very least we can feel very optimistic for the summer term; there is more detail relating to options for overseas pupils below.

### Testing and Covid-secure arrangements

With Eastbourne Covid case figures very low again (half the national average) and an ever-larger number of people in the UK vaccinated, pupils returning to school should feel very safe. Nevertheless, it is sensible and government-mandated that we keep to the arrangements for social distancing in school, enhanced cleaning and hygiene, and retain the system of 'bubbles'. We also have to be strict with wearing face coverings, requiring them during lessons (unless doing activity such as PE) as well as in public spaces.

Essentially **the measures in place are as they were** for our (brief) start in January and similar to the way Michaelmas term operated successfully with pupils in school.

Without going into too much detail here, I remind you that pupils should not come into school if anyone in the household: has any of the classic Covid symptoms; has tested positive; or is required to self-isolate. (The full government guidance is online [here](#).)

As we are already well practised and have systems in place for home testing, our risk assessment is that it is safer for pupils and the wider community for the mandatory twice-weekly testing to take place at home (or in the boarding house where appropriate). Almost every pupil should have one Medatest kit to use on the afternoon-evening of **Sunday 7 March** prior to the restart. We will let you know shortly on how we will arrange to send out more tests to those who need them. Once at school, pupils will be provided with a further three Medatests to last the subsequent two Wednesday and single Sunday evenings. To be able to fulfil our requirements to report to government test and trace, we will ask you to report the results online using a simple school form that will be sent out nearer to the time. It is essential that the tests are undertaken by all pupils at home and prior to leaving for school (however a pupil intends to travel) in order that we can do our best to ensure that the College is Covid-free. If any pupil tests positive then they need a follow-up PCR test as soon as possible. Concurrently we will ascertain close contacts for isolation in case it is required by a positive follow-up result. Thereafter, into the summer term if required, we are likely to move to the government-provided home tests.

Home testing for this two-week period avoids the increased transmission risk inherent on bringing hundreds of untested pupils in for testing at the same place and prevents the need to waste the first week or so of teaching on staggered returns to manage the logistics of testing.

Our term ends earlier than most schools but we start summer a week earlier which I hope will find better conditions in place and maximise the convenience for parents and the enjoyment of school for pupils.

## Exams and mocks

Monday's announcement did not include any further information about the replacement for GCSE and A-level exams, which is now expected later this week. We know already that centre-assessed grades based on a range of evidence, including, but not only, mocks or assessments next term, will be the system used. I will write to you late next week so you have all the information you need and pupils have plenty of advance notice of what is required of them. If you have children in Year 11 or 13 you will know that they are very anxious about this limbo and will welcome greater clarity. Please reassure them that for now ordinary schoolwork is all that is required and that we will ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged by the grading mechanism put in place.

## Return arrangements for overseas pupils

(NB Although it does not apply to the majority of our overseas pupils, I should mention that anyone travelling from **or through** a [red list](#) country should **not** attempt to return to school. They would require isolating in a government hotel for ten days with a parent or guardian. Anyone concerned about this situation should speak with their hsm when they make plans for the start of the summer term.)

Happily, for pupils travelling from the majority of countries, the ten-day quarantine is allowed to be served at a guardian or in boarding schools. Accordingly, should any parent wish their child to come back for the last two weeks of this term we recommend they travel as soon as possible to serve the quarantine with guardians prior to 8 March. If guardians are not available we would be happy to welcome the pupils to self-isolate in houses during that period. Any parents considering these options need to make arrangements for appropriate testing prior to travel and should discuss arrangements with their hsm. It is, however, a relatively short period and we are not able to remain open through the Easter holidays, so we do not expect the majority of overseas pupils to take this option. We will, of course, continue to provide the best possible remote learning options for all our pupils not able to return.

For **the summer term return we look forward to welcoming back all overseas pupils**. Again, parents can maximise the amount of enjoyable school time by arranging where possible for children to return to their UK guardians for the ten days prior to the start of term, which is the evening of 12 April. If guardians cannot be used, we can arrange for pupils to stay in school from the evening of 5 April so they can start their self-isolation early. We will work with hsm on the precise details of the summer term return over the coming weeks so that you can speak with them in good time about arrangements.

I am truly excited by the prospect of bringing your children back for what is, surely, this time, a path to ever-increasing proper school life and the joy that will bring us all.

With best wishes and fond regards,



Tom Lawson  
**Headmaster**

Cc staff, pupils