

FROM THE HEADMASTER
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TONBRIDGE
SCHOOL

18 December 2020

Dear Parents,

We have been giving careful thought to our plans for the safe return of pupils and staff at the beginning of the Lent Term. These have been based on the experience of delivering our Back to School Strategy in September and the latest information available from our specialist advisers, Sutton House.

Our plans also take account of the announcements made this week by the Department for Education regarding a phased return for secondary school pupils in the first week of January and the proposed availability of regular testing to maximise face-to-face teaching and to support the full re-opening of schools.

Community Screening

At the start of next term, we will be conducting community screening of all boys (except those required to quarantine) before they return to School using a Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Testing Kit, otherwise known as a Lateral Flow Assay (LFA).

We are aware that there are some concerns about the accuracy of such tests, given that some can have relatively low sensitivity and return false negative results. We will therefore be conducting two simultaneous tests for each boy to improve the accuracy of test results. This approach will significantly increase the overall sensitivity of LFAs used for this type of screening.

Boys will be allowed to return to School only if both tests are negative; if one test is positive, the individual will not be able to return to School and will need to take a confirmatory PCR test and follow isolation guidelines. Boys will be able to access remote learning during this period.

The staggered return to School at the start of next term (described below) is, in part, designed to allow this screening to take place for all boys before they return to School.

Regular Testing

Furthermore, in addition to the many safety and hygiene precautions already in place, the School intends to implement key components of the rapid asymptomatic testing programme for schools as soon as further information is available. We will be following Government announcements closely over the holiday period.

This programme has two key components. Firstly, teachers and other staff will be able to have routine testing once a week and will not come into School if they test positive. Secondly, all boys and staff will be able to have 'serial testing' if one of their close contacts tests positive in order to keep more boys and staff in School.

We will also continue to deploy rapid on-site PCR testing to respond to symptomatic cases amongst pupils and staff using the Samba-II facility which has provided us with much-valued continuity since the summer.

Hands Face Space

It is important to note that community screening and routine testing will be used in combination with a range of other preventative measures now well-established within the School community: 'Hands, Face, Space'. These include social distancing and the use of household bubbles in both day and boarding houses; daily temperature checking and the use of thermal cameras at key reception points; hand sanitisation, readily available throughout the campus; the use of face masks in corridors and enclosed spaces; and the use of PPE.

Phased Return to School

We will manage a phased return to School for pupils during the week of Monday 4 January, prioritising those in public examination year groups (U6 and Third Year) and ensuring that all overseas boys (Novi-U6) are able to return safely to School from Tuesday 5 January as planned.

Schedule of Screening and Lessons for Week 1											
Days →	Monday 04 January		Tuesday 05 January		Wednesday 06 January		Thursday 07 January		Friday 08 January		Saturday 09 January
Year Groups ↓	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	Morning
UVI Day Boys		Screening			Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
UVI Boarders				Screening	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
LVI Day Boys					Screening and IS*	IS*	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
LVI Boarders					IS*	Screening and IS*	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
Year 3 Day Boys	Screening				Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations
Year 3 Boarders				Screening	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations	Mock Examinations
Year 2 Day Boys					Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Screening and IS*	IS*	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
Year 2 Boarders					Online Lessons	Online Lessons	IS*	Screening and IS*	Lessons in School	Lessons in School	Lessons in School
Novi Day Boys					Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Screening and IS*	IS*	Lessons in School
Novi Boarders					Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Online Lessons	Online Lessons	IS*	Screening and IS*	Lessons in School

Notes: IS* - Teachers will set work for Independent Study. Boys can return to School once their negative test is confirmed.

Community screening of all boys will take place in the Tonbridge School Centre throughout the first week of term with allocated times for boys depending on their year group and whether they are day boys or boarders as shown in the schedule. **Further details of the screening programme will be communicated next week.**

Parents will be able to drop their sons off and then wait in their vehicles in the TSC car park for the result of their son's test to be communicated by email or phone. We expect the testing process to take between 45-60 minutes.

We are extremely grateful to the parents of day boys in the Upper Sixth and Third Year for bringing their sons into School for testing on Monday 4 January, as this will enable us to ensure that all Upper Sixth pupils can begin face-to-face lessons from Wednesday 6 January and that Third Year pupils can also begin their Mock GCSE examinations from the beginning of term. Day boys and their parents will not need to wait at the School for their test results on Monday 4 January.

Boys in all other year groups will be able to access remote learning from Wednesday 6 January, with Lower Sixth boys resuming face-to-face learning from Thursday 7 January (with boarders returning the previous afternoon or evening), Second Year boys from Friday 8 January (with boarders returning the previous afternoon or evening), and Novi from Saturday 10 January (with Novi boarders able to return the previous afternoon or evening, depending on the timing of their screening test).

Overseas Boys

We are very much looking forward to welcoming back those boys who have returned to see their families overseas for the Christmas break. We all saw the benefits of having them in School for so much of the Michaelmas Term and were extremely happy that all the hard work put in meant they had as smooth a journey home as possible in the circumstances.

Boys who are returning from countries within the UK travel corridor will be able to return directly to School as normal once they have also taken part in our community screening on the day of their return to the UK. Anyone who tests positive will need to take a confirmatory PCR test and follow isolation guidelines. We continue to have arrangements in place with the Medical Centre and Houses to manage self-isolation within School for any boys unable to stay with family members or guardians within the UK.

All boys will be able to access remote learning from their Houses until the scheduled time in which face-to-face learning can be resumed for their year group, as shown above. In the highly unlikely event that schools are asked to close, overseas boys will be able to remain in School where they will continue to be looked after by House staff and from where they can access remote lessons.

Boys who are returning from countries which require a period of quarantine on arrival within the UK will be able to complete this at School and should fill out this [form](#). They will not need to participate in the community screening as they will have a confirmatory PCR test which, if negative, will enable them to reduce the required quarantine period to five days.

We will be communicating separately with all overseas parents about arrangements available for residential programmes at School during the February half term break and Easter holiday in the event that boys need to be accommodated through these periods, especially those preparing for GCSE and A level examinations in the summer. We are very grateful for the positive feedback on arrangements made in October and look forward to developing a similar programme for the next two holiday periods to support our overseas families.

Covid Test Tracking

We would be grateful if all parents could complete the Covid Test Tracker form available [here](#) so that the School can hold up-to-date information on any tests taken by boys during the holiday period. It can be completed on multiple occasions. Thank you for your assistance with this.

Remote Learning

Whilst we look forward to the large majority of boys being able to attend School in person and experience the academic and social benefits of face-to-face teaching and learning, we recognise that there will continue to be occasions when individuals necessarily have to self-isolate but are otherwise well enough to continue to engage in remote learning.

We are therefore looking to enhance our provision for remote or hybrid learning from next term by equipping all teaching staff with wireless head sets and installing web cameras in all classrooms to improve the quality of sound and vision for those participating in lessons temporarily from home. We will also be delivering additional staff training in January.

Given that the Government remains committed to public examinations in the summer, it is particularly important that we are able to maintain as much continuity as possible for the boys, and we hope that these additional steps will ensure a high quality experience for all pupils and staff next term.

Contact

Further information about the LFA testing and arrangements for community screening at the beginning of next term will be circulated to parents next week.

If you have any queries at all, please contact the following email address and we will look forward to responding as soon as we are able: screening@tonbridge-school.org

The overwhelming evidence, and our experience at the end of the Michaelmas Term, remains that this illness is usually very mild in young people. The additional measures outlined above will continue to protect both the boys and staff so that we are able to provide as full an educational experience as possible, as was achieved in the Michaelmas Term.

Thank you for your support and understanding in managing these arrangements which will help to ensure a smooth and safe start to the beginning of the Lent Term.

We also ask that you take every precaution with your sons in the lead up to the start of term regarding social gatherings. Whilst community screening will be extremely helpful, it remains important that boys and their families follow the relevant health and safety guidelines.

I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. J.', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.