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22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

**Re: Coronavirus Update (22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021)**

I would like to keep you updated on some of the developments that have been taking place this week.

I continue to be very impressed with the engagement being shown by both staff and students during this period of lockdown. The regularity of staff sharing ideas and resources to make remote learning as effective as possible reflects the impressive levels of dedication and creativity that are being applied in these circumstances. I am delighted that we have been able to minimise the disruption to learning through live lessons which will continue for as long as the current restrictions are in place.

The initial communication at the start of this month from the Department for Education was that schools would remain mostly closed until after the February half term (week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021). The high numbers of coronavirus cases and deaths and particular concerns about how contagious the new strain is have cast doubt on whether this date remains feasible. Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Education appeared on a number of media channels stating that he hoped schools “could reopen before Easter” and that schools would be given at least two weeks’ notice before fully reopening. Clearly, this is a decision that is very much dependent on what happens with the number of cases over the next few weeks but the school will be ready to respond to whatever emerges.

Part of the government’s plans for the reopening of schools is based around the rapid lateral flow tests that we have been asked to administer on-site. We have extended a significant amount of time, effort and resources to creating a testing centre that has the capability to give regular tests to the staff and students who are currently attending school. The current plan is that, as well as offering regular tests for staff, we will be expected to test all students with consent before they make a return to school. All schools have been asked to pause any asymptomatic testing including the testing of anyone identified as a close contact to a positive case. We await further clarification and guidance on this important topic, especially as it is currently so central to the return of students to schools in the coming weeks or months.

In the meantime, we must cling on to the idea of *hope*. *Hope* that the roll-out of vaccinations continues at a pace to protect the most vulnerable in society. *Hope* that we move closer with every vaccination to a return to normality where young people can attend their schools, see their friends and enjoy the kind of freedoms we had all taken for granted before this pandemic. *Hope* that we have all learned valuable lessons about the importance of education and the opportunities presented by remote learning that can be further explored when we return.

Of course hope is often realised through action. As a school, we are working on significant short, medium and long term plans to ensure there is a brighter future for our students and the wider community. I look forward to sharing these with you in due course.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes



Mr Jeremy Scott  
**Headteacher**