



26 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Covid-19 – return to school after lockdown from 8 March/arrangements for lateral flow testing in order to return to school, examinations 2021, school transport from 8 March, learning recovery announcements, summer schools

I hope that my weekly letter finds you well after the half term break. It has been a fast-paced week of major announcements in education including a sooner than expected full return to the classroom across all educational sectors. I will try to make some sense of all of this below:

Covid-19 – return to school after lockdown from 8 March/arrangements for lateral flow testing in order to return to school

Media headlines this week have often proved unhelpful in terms of the planned return. All students will not return on 8 March, rather, we will begin to reopen from that date for formal education subject to a lateral flow testing regime. In short, year groups will be tested from Thursday 4 March in the upper school in order to accommodate them into lessons from 8 March. It is my intention to stagger entry to the Academy in line with the guidance as follows:

- Y11 and 13 – testing on 4 March and return to lessons on 8 March
- Y10 and 12 – testing on 5 March and return to lessons on 8 March
- Y9 – testing on 8 March and return to lessons on 9 March
- Y8 – testing on 9 March and return to lessons on 10 March
- Y7 – testing on 10 March and return to lessons on 11 March

All students will be back in class with a negative test by the Thursday of the week beginning 8 March in line with the national guidance. This is more rapid than many other schools I am working with. All tests are voluntary and will be carried out by existing school staff in our Specialised Learning Centre by Mr Burr, Mr Turner, Ms Rowley, Mrs Watson and Ms Hirst. If parents prefer their children not to be tested this is your right, but your child will only return to the Academy when their whole year group does during that week.

I will publish more specific testing guidance and FAQs on Monday so please bear with me as your questions should be answered then. As you might imagine, I am currently deluged with enquiries.

In addition, some small tweaks have been made to the cleaning schedule which are reflected in our updated risk assessment which will also be published on Monday and masks will be mandatory in all classrooms until the Easter break as we cannot secure a 2m distance between students in our learning spaces. I will review that decision at that time once I have more data.

I recognise that this is far from ideal. However, with the prevalence of the new variants in the wider community and the lack of vaccinations for my staff team who number 150 people, I have to exercise my duty of care for them too as well as the student body. I have already received some ferocious emails even prior to writing this letter to you objecting to masks being worn, but the decision stands in the wider interests of public safety in my academy community.

If any parents have any other concerns related to Covid-19 in school, please contact us at the Academy using the email address COVID@srpa.co.uk.

Examinations 2021

I am very comfortable with the proposed system for examination grades this summer. We are in a good position and will manage this well. Teachers will submit grades to the examination boards by Friday 18 June. This allows as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments of students and submit their final grades.

Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week beginning 9 August (10 August for post-16 and 12 August for GCSE) – moved forward from the week beginning 23 August. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance of accessing a place.

To support teachers in making their judgements, examination boards will provide detailed guidance before the end of the spring term. However, the proposed 'mini exams' will not materialise; we will receive possible examination questions by subject but will only use them where we do not feel we possess enough tangible evidence to grade youngsters in either year group. Examination centres have the choice of using these centrally suggested questions but I do not intend to run a full formal run of testing for either Year 11 or 13 as I do not think it is needed.

I will publish more about this in due course once further detail is supplied but please see the attached infographic from Ofqual for now. You will have found out about this when I did as schools were not informed before the headline appeared in the national press.

School transport from 8 March

The education transport network will operate in full from 8 March 2021 for all eligible children. This should only be used where absolutely necessary to reduce interactions between pupils. Where possible, parents/carers are encouraged to transport their children to the Academy wherever possible at the request of LCC.



Head Teacher: Mr D. J. Hardy BA (Hons) PGCE
Moor Lane, North Hykeham, Lincoln. LN6 9AF
☎ 01522 882020
✉ enquiries@srpa.co.uk 🌐 www.srpa.co.uk
Company Registration No: 07690250

"This is a calm, happy and caring school."

The Council has updated its information page for parents and carers. Please visit <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-college-transport/covid-19-information-school-transport> for more information.

Please encourage all students to maintain social distancing, wear a face covering and follow all other infection prevention control measures wherever possible on education transport. The latest government guidance states that any youngster displaying coronavirus symptoms, or who has had a positive test, while at school should NOT use public or dedicated school transport. Students should be collected by a member of their family or household.

If you are concerned that education transport is not running as expected from 8 March 2021 please email TSG@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Learning recovery announcements

This week, we have heard much of the many millions being spent on so called ‘catch up.’ We will never refer to any learning loss in this way as I have written about in previous letters. We will publish our plans in due course, but I am a big fan of high calibre teachers and teaching rather than initiatives that look pretty but do not achieve much. Mrs Spors will lead on this strategy and will communicate our thinking in the future. For now, we need to focus on a sensible return to school and no small amount of wellbeing support.

Summer schools

Another unhelpful media headline from this week has surrounded summer schools. It is unfortunate that schools only find out about national initiatives once the press know. However, I can confirm that, as I write, I have no intention of holding a summer school for any current student of the Academy. We may consider this as a transition initiative for current Year 6 youngsters due to join us, but it is far too early to say anything further as yet, given that the specific guidance has not yet been published. If anyone is familiar with the work of the Education Endowment Foundation, you will know that summer schools are not considered to be particularly impactful in narrowing any gaps and I am not a huge fan of this as a ‘gimmicky catch up’ tool.

I was surprised to see the other devolved nations of the UK opt for a more cautious approach to the full return to school while we plough on from 8 March in England. I fully support youngsters coming back to school but urge prudence and caution in decision making over the next few weeks. I already know that I won’t be able to please everyone and that much is already clear from some of the emails I have received. However, over the next few weeks, I will need to show resilience, fortitude and an ability to carry a large team through a very challenging time. I intend to do that. In the words of author Roy T. Bennett, “Life is about accepting the challenges along the way, choosing to keep moving forward, and savouring the journey.”



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t 01522 882020
e enquiries@srpa.co.uk www.srpa.co.uk
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Have a lovely weekend when it comes.

I will write again soon.

Yours faithfully



Mr D Hardy
Head Teacher



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