



Wigston Academy

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1st January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope that you and your family have had a healthy and restful break. We write to you in light of several further Government announcements this week. It continues to be a fast developing situation and we are working hard in the limited time provided to ensure that we communicate the relevant information to you. Outlined below is new information about our changed starting dates for this term and updated information about the Government's school testing plans.

New start dates for students

As you will have probably heard in the news the government has announced that students will now return to secondary schools as follows:

- Vulnerable students and those children of critical workers will return to school on Tuesday 5th January at the normal staggered times.
- We already know the students in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 who are critical worker children, but if your circumstances have changed please tell us.
- For Year 7 critical worker children, please will you contact us by phone on the 4th January 2021 ideally between 9am and 12pm.

The return to school dates for others are currently scheduled as follows:

- All Year 11 and Year 13 students from Monday 11th January 2021.
- All Year 12 students who have January exams or controlled assessment from Monday 11th January 2021. These students will be contacted directly by the sixth form team.
- All other Year groups from Monday 18th January 2021.

The start and finish times are the normal times of the school day as outlined in the end of term letter and bulletin.

While students are not in school, we will continue to provide a range of remote learning opportunities. The majority of lessons for Academy students will be on our website via our new remote learning tab. Further learning will be provided through Satchel:One and Teams for those in Year 11. Year 12 and 13 lessons will carry on through Teams.

We will provide free school meals for eligible students to collect, available from the Academy between 12pm and 1pm, as we did throughout lock-down.

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for staff and students

We have been working to keep our schools as safe as possible. You may have heard that testing for those without coronavirus symptoms is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school and college safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing, the evidence suggests that we will help to stop the virus spreading and therefore help to keep our school and college open as safely as possible.

We will be aiming to start the testing of all staff who want to participate from the week commencing 4th January 2021, and will then prioritise students depending on the guidance that we expect to get next week.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under-18s, staff can oversee the swab process. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and students participating. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

The government tells us that these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

To ensure that we are as prepared as we can be for the testing, we are asking that if you are happy for your child to be tested that you please complete the consent and registration form via this link:

<https://forms.gle/dmSz4fy2FEH4mGYu5>

What if a student tests positive?

Participating staff and students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Students will need to take a further PCR test (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). Schools and colleges will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, you should consider visiting a drive-through test site if possible instead, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

Your child should self-isolate during the time they are waiting for the PCR result (which comes via text/email). If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to continue to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

Your child will be able to stay in school or college and resume their activities as normal. A student will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear anything from us you can assume it was negative. The same applies to students when they are in school or college. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school/college tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school/college who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school/college if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 continuous days and the test is negative each time. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school/college who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer your child to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing,

you can. We would recommend that your child participates in the testing programme as this will enable them to remain in school and support their learning where they are free of the virus.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school/college is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland) or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. Please do not send them to school or college on the basis that they will be tested there anyway. This obviously puts others at an unnecessary risk.

Thank you in advance for your help with this. Please be mindful, as we have seen in the past, things change quickly and we will of course keep you updated. If in the meantime, if you require any further information, please contact us.

Yours faithfully,



Mr M. Wilson
Headteacher
Wigston Academy
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