

Friday 29th January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

Re: COVID19 Update – 27.1.21 Government Announcement on Return of Schools and Colleges

I trust you are safe and well. I would like to provide a brief overview on the updates that have occurred since my last communication to you.

Firstly, I would just like to congratulate all of you on your tremendous attitude and commitment during what has been an incredibly challenging time. Working remotely is far from ideal, but as the attendance figures show, students have remained dedicated to their studies and have positively engaged with their online lessons, assemblies, tutor activities and enrichment clubs. It is critical during this lockdown period to maintain healthy routines and stay focused on what you need to achieve. Secondly, I would like to thank the teachers and all the academy staff who have adapted so quickly to new ways of working to provide the best possible learning experience. So many of parents have written in expressing their gratitude, which is greatly appreciated.

When will I be returning to onsite learning at OPA?

On Wednesday evening, the Prime Minister announced that the earliest date schools and colleges will return to face-to-face teaching is **Monday 8 March 2021**. It was stressed that this was not set in stone and subject to the prevalence of coronavirus at the time. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, has stated that we will be given two weeks' notice of any return. It is not yet known as to whether all students will return at once or whether it will be a staggered return. As and when we receive any updates, we will let you know.

Is OPA open over half term?

The Government confirmed this week that it is not expecting schools and colleges to open during February half term to students, including vulnerable and key worker students. Therefore, the academy will not be open to students during the half term week (15 – 19 February).

Is there an update on the qualifications?

As I outlined in my previous letter, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a consultation on how exams will be replaced, and grades awarded this summer. The consultation is due to close today. However, it will be several weeks before we are informed of the outcome and details procedures are announced.

Will students be tested for coronavirus upon return to on site learning at OPA?

The Government have asked schools and colleges to mass test students using lateral flow devices upon an initial return. It is not compulsory for us to participate, but I am pleased to confirm that it is our current intention to do so. The logistics of this are immense and we have been hard at work putting the facilities and additional staffing in place to accommodate this. Further details, including a reissue on information about consent, will be sent out once we have confirmation of a return date. Please note that it is not the Government's intention to test students beyond an initial round in their first week back. However, this may change as the return plans are made available.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Roessler
Principal
Ormiston Park Academy