

Progress Schools,  
Switch House, Suite B2,  
First Floor,  
North Perimeter Road,  
Bootle, L30 7PT

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope my message finds you well.

Many of you will have seen the Prime Minister's briefing last week in which he outlined the government's roadmap to gradually ease lockdown restrictions. We were pleased to hear that from Monday 8th March, all our students will be able to return to our school for face-to-face teaching.

### **Continuing to give our students the support they need**

We know the toll lockdown has had on the mental and physical wellbeing of our students, so we're very keen to have our students back in the school where we can give them the support they need.

We also know that the risks of being out of school are high and increase the longer restrictions are in place, which is why the government has continually prioritised keeping our schools fully open.

Furthermore, the overwhelming evidence is that the risk to children from COVID-19 is low, and despite initial concerns, the new variant is not affecting children and young people disproportionately.

### **Protecting our students and staff within the school**

We continue to take every precaution here at the school, including regular and focussed cleaning, social distancing and ensuring good hand and respiratory hygiene.

In order to ensure an even safer environment, our staff will continue to be regularly tested for COVID-19 twice a week and face coverings will be worn by staff in communal areas as before. Finally, students and staff who are confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable will be asked to stay at home while shielding advice applies nationally.

The school will continue to be carefully cleaned each night and it will also have a brief clean at lunchtime. As well as this, staff in each group will be cleaning surfaces, handles and equipment with anti-viral spray. To avoid a lot of sharing, students will have personal stationery in a pencil case. Cleaning products will be stored out of reach of students and products that can be cleaned after use will be cleaned each day.

Home to school transport provided or organised by our schools are working together with local authorities and with relevant transport providers to put in place arrangements which fit the local circumstances, including the measures being put in place to reduce contact.

We will continue to provide lunches for all our students in attendance within our schools and we are ensuring that meals are able to be prepared and served safely.

### **On-site testing and results**

Testing is not mandatory, but we strongly encourage all students to participate in order to protect their own health and the health of others. **Please can we therefore request that you complete the enclosed *Testing Consent Form* and return to us in the self-addressed envelope provided as soon as possible.** Your consent to asymptomatic testing will help reduce transmission rates and contribute to the suppression of the virus across the region. Testing will be carried out every 3-5 days in-line with government guidance.

Assuming consent has been given, a group of students will be collected from their lesson and escorted to a designated classroom - where we have set up our temporary testing centre. Students will walk towards and then queue two metres apart and, one at a time, be invited to provide a swab sample. They will be shown how to swab their tonsils / tonsil area and one nostril before carefully dropping the swab into a special vial / mini test tube. And that's it – in and out in less than 3-5 minutes.

Approximately 30-60 minutes after the swab sample is provided the result will be uploaded to the NHS test and trace service. This triggers an instantaneous email and text message to the address and phone number that has been provided on the consent form. It is important to be aware that the NHS will only contact those with a positive result. All users should assume that if they don't hear anything, it is negative.

### **Helping to create an even safer school environment**

The health and wellbeing of your child is our number one priority and we will do everything in our power to ensure their safety. We believe the additional measures outlined above will go even further in helping to maintain a safer school environment for all.

As a school, we have reviewed and where necessary, updated our risk assessment as we prepare to welcome back more students, and making sure that we are following our system of controls to minimise the risk of infection, including plan for asymptomatic testing. We also have a contingency plan in place for outbreaks in our school or changes in restrictions.

We are offering the opportunity to speak with us before the 8<sup>th</sup> March via phone or face to face remotely via Microsoft Teams (through an emailed link). Please email me on your head of school and we can arrange an appointment for you to discuss any queries or concerns which you may have. This is an opportunity for us to allay any fears your child may have and work with them to make their start back to school as happy and successful as possible.

In the meantime, may I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and we are all really looking forward to seeing your child again on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

Yours sincerely,

James Madine

Progress Schools, CEO

