



# Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

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Executive Headteacher/CEO: Alun Williams

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Company No: 7365778

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Dear Parents/Carers

Yesterday the Department for Education issued guidance on COVID-19 testing in schools from Monday 4th January and the planned arrangements for the return of children after Christmas. We have yet to receive exact details of how testing will work in schools, but I thought you would value some information from us before the start of the Christmas break. **We cannot at this stage give you any information at all about the possibility of mass testing, as the guidance is yet to be issued and may be subject to significant change.**

Although our schools have experienced a low number of positive of COVID-19 cases, we know that there is clear evidence that many people do not display any symptoms of the disease. The Government believes that it is those that display no symptoms (including children), that are spreading COVID-19 and by introducing more testing, they will be able to identify asymptomatic carriers of the virus and then break disease transmission chains.

**In order to prepare for the possibility of mass testing, the Government has issued instructions to schools about a phased return of children in the New Year.**

## Phased Return Arrangements:

- Children in Years 11 and 13 should return to school as planned on Wednesday 6th January.
- Children in all other year groups who are vulnerable (those with an Education Health Care Plan, Looked After Children, or children subject to care plans) or who are the children of critical workers can also return to school on Wednesday 6th January.
- Children in all primary and special schools can return to school as scheduled, on Wednesday 6th January.
- Children in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 that do not fall into one of the above groups **MUST STAY AT HOME UNTIL Monday 11th January** and will not receive face-to-face teaching until the second week of term.
- All external exams for Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 will take place as planned.
- Year 12 mocks will take place at Writhlington and MSN Sixth Form from the 11th to 15th of January. This is a slight change in the planned timetable following the Government announcement.

Secondary schools within the Trust will contact parents directly to collect information on those children that are likely to return in the first week after the Christmas break.

Schools will endeavour to provide remote learning via google classroom for those students not in school, along with some live lessons. The quality of these has improved significantly and I'd like to thank Parents/Carers for their positive feedback.

When students return to school, the current risk assessment for that school remains in force and all current measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remain applicable – student bubbles, social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, etc.

Clearly, mass testing has a number of challenges that have not yet been resolved by the Government at this stage. We are expecting further guidance in the coming week and when this is received, I will write to you again with further details about how testing will work and the specific arrangements that will be made. What is clear, is that we will need parental consent prior to conducting any testing. Please be ready to give this at short notice, as I suspect the turnaround will be tight. It is not yet possible to say how and who will





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perform the test, but we have had guidance on the type of rooms and arrangement of furniture we should be planning to use.

School transport to and from school will continue as normal for students attending from Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January. The families of Free School Meal children will receive a food parcel, as is currently the case. These will be available in school from the Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January for collection.

In further national updates, the government has set aside £170 million of grant funding to support the most vulnerable families during the winter months. This is allocated to Local Authorities and more information is available via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-winter-grant-scheme>

I know this is yet another change of plan from the Government, but as you will all appreciate, it is a fast moving situation. As I said in my most recent letter, I hope everyone has an enjoyable (small and short) Christmas.

Kind regards

Alun Williams  
CEO

