



FITZHARRYS SCHOOL

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Head of School: Mr W Speke, BA (Hons)

26 February 2021

Dear parents and carers,

I hope that you and your families are well.

Following the announcement on Monday of the re-opening of schools for all students from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, I am writing to update you on our plans. Whilst we are busy preparing for their return, we are all excited about having everyone back to learn, interact and enjoy being at Fitzharrys. Amidst this eagerness to have students back in school, we must all remember that we remain in a pandemic and need to be careful to ensure that the Fitzharrys community continues to be vigilant in reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

There are several key elements to ensuring this safe return of students, including information about testing, a timeline for students' return, measures in school, learning expectations, public examinations, and some changes in school moving forward.

### Testing

For the safe return of students, they must complete three COVID-19 tests in our on-site testing centre, followed by a home testing programme. Regular testing is a key strategy for keeping the virus suppressed and protecting our wider community, and schools play a key role in this. Mr Williams continues to lead our in-school testing and has written a letter outlining the testing process over the coming weeks, a copy of which is attached. Please read this carefully and ensure that you have completed the consent form for your child having tests in school.

We will be inviting all students to have a test in school before they can return to full time education on site. After this initial test they will return home and, with a negative result, will then be able to come into school the next working day. Details of the exact timings for these tests will be sent to all parents and carers in advance. Students will then have 2 more tests during the school day before Easter, after which they will use home testing kits.

We strongly recommend that all students take part in this to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. Whilst this testing is not compulsory, it will also allow us to know of any infections at their early stage and pick up any asymptomatic cases. This will reduce the need to send close contacts home or close bubbles as often.



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The timetable for this testing and returning to school is as follows:

Year group	Date of initial test	Date of first full day in school
12/13	Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> March (at JMS site)	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
11	Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> March	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
10	Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
9	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March
8	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March
7	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> March

Remote learning will continue for those groups still working from home during this testing phase, this will be primarily recorded lessons, though morning registration will remain live unless it is their first testing day.

Vulnerable and key worker students will continue to attend school until their year group return to school. These students will be tested separately.

### Face coverings

Upon their return to school students will continue to adhere to the measures taken to reduce infection that were in place before Christmas. There have been some changes to the government guidance on measures schools should take to reduce transmission.

As before, students will be required to wear face masks when in indoor communal areas such as corridors, halls, toilets, and stairwells, where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. They will now also need to wear a face mask in lessons. Those with medical exemptions will not be required to do this. If your child has a medical exemption, please confirm this with us by emailing [office.4127@fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.4127@fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk) giving the reason for the exemption.

Wearing face coverings is a recommendation from the government and is only expected to be in place until the Easter break. We will be asking all students to wear this as part of our uniform and will be reminding students of the importance of this regularly. We will also be providing them with a sealable plastic bag to allow safe wearing and removal of their face covering. Please ensure that your child comes to school with a clean or new face covering each day. Please note that face visors or shields should not be worn by students as an alternative to face coverings.

### Reducing the risk

In school we will be maintaining our bubble system, regular hand washing, and reminders about social distancing. It could be easy for students to relax once they are back in school, but it is vital that these measures are followed by all. We will be reminding students of the importance of not mixing bubbles and adhering to the reasonable expectations we have set out to keep everyone safe.

It is also important to remember that outside of school lockdown remains in place. Students must walk to school only with students in their bubble (unless it is a sibling), maintain social distancing when coming to and from school, and should be following the government rules on lockdown during evenings and at weekends. By everyone adhering to these rules, we will increase the chances of them being relaxed sooner and protect those in our community.

### Learning expectations

We are proud of how Fitzharrys students have approached remote learning during lockdown. Students have worked well in challenging circumstances under the skilled guidance of their teachers. On coming into school, we will expect those high levels of focus and engagement in lessons, accompanied by the positive behaviour that we are used to. Students should bring in their exercise books and work from during lockdown to school. Teachers are already planning their adjustments to the curriculum to ensure any gaps are covered, with key skills and knowledge the focus.

Please remind your child to bring the appropriate books and equipment on the correct days. Lockers remain out of use due to bubble mixing, so planning and organisation will be vital. These skills will also be important for when our homework timetable returns to normal from 15<sup>th</sup> March - students will not be set homework in the first week back to school. When homework does resume it will continue to be set on

E-Praise. Some teachers will also set homework to be submitted via Teams.

### Public examinations

Yesterday we received the first guidance about the process for awarding A level and GCSE grades. We will now plan how this guidance will work in school and will be communicating to the affected year groups in the coming weeks. In the meantime, our guidance for students remains the same; keep working hard in lessons and at home. We will update affected students and parents on finer detail as soon as we can.

### Moving forward

Whilst most students have been working remotely there have been some changes in school. Firstly, there are new gates for vehicles and pedestrians at the front of school. We are very pleased to increase the security of our site and know that the new gate will improve the safeguarding of students and staff. The gates will be open at the start and end of the school day to allow entry and exit. During the school day visitors will need to buzz in using the intercom. This is a positive step for Fitzharrys in ensuring our site is even safer.

Our site team have been busy refurbishing mini-west block ready for lessons, repairing benches around school, replacing tiles and flooring in key corridors, and have installed new blinds in East block. These are all changes which will benefit students upon their return.

After Easter we will be changing our catering supplier to the Abingdon Learning Trust catering company which already supplies food at schools within the trust and local primary schools. They will be using a cashless system, using ParentPay, which many of you already use for trips and events payments in school. Until they start, we will continue with a cash payment system, and our staggered sittings approach to break and lunchtime. We will be running a slightly reduced menu at lunchtime to enable the transition to our new supplier. In the coming weeks, there will be exciting opportunities for students to be involved in the name and design of our new catering service, as well as having a say in menu choices.

This week we also had the positive news of our largest new year 7 cohort for a number of years. We will have 5 form entry from September and are looking forward to welcoming our new students through our transition process in the coming months.

I am aware that there is a lot of information and things to consider. Yet I know that the adjustments we have made will allow students and staff to work and learn in a safe environment with the risk of transmission of COVID-19 as low as possible.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Will Speke  
Head of School



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