



## Chigwell School

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Dear Parents

Further to the brief Schoolpost message that I sent on Thursday, I am writing with more detail about arrangements for the start of term, given that the School is in an area of high infection in Tier 4 and also subject to the [Contingency Framework](#) arrangements. As I summarised in my previous message, the arrangements for the start of term are as follows (although if there are further announcements by the Prime Minister these may need to be modified):

- Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January: Boarders who need to quarantine will begin to return and self-isolate in the boarding houses, as arranged with boarding house staff
- Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January: Staff will join INSET day
- Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January: Remote teaching will take place for all pupils. Provision will be made for vulnerable children and children of [critical workers](#) to be looked after in school
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January: Pupils in Years 11 and 13 will return to school for face to face teaching
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January: Pupils in other year groups will return to school, subject to a government review of the Contingency Framework

### 1. Remote Learning

Whilst we would much prefer to have all pupils in school from the very start of term, this will not be possible currently because of the pandemic. However, we will ensure that remote learning begins for all from the start of term on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January. We have extensive experience of delivering education in this way, having done so last year, and details explaining arrangements in the Pre Prep, Junior and Senior schools will follow. We are aware that pupils who joined the School in September may be less familiar with the use of MS Teams, for example, and support will be provided to those pupils and parents. If there are any concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch. In most cases, older pupils are more self-reliant whilst the very youngest pupils will need more parental input but staff will tailor teaching and the associated activities accordingly. The feedback that we had from parents and pupils suggested that remote learning last year was highly effective and we will be working hard to ensure that all pupils have the best experience possible whilst the current arrangements are in place.

Arrangements that apply to particular year groups will be dealt with separately, such as regarding the Lower Fifth exams which were due to begin on Thursday and the plans for the entrance exams which are likely to change. However, if you have questions, please do contact us.

### 2. Exam Year Groups

The Government has stated that GCSE and A level exams will go ahead in the summer and, therefore, Year 11 and 13 pupils are to attend school from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January in England. These will be amongst the first pupils to have a rapid COVID test in school (see below) and details regarding arrangements for their return will follow.

Progress through the examination content for these year groups is well-advanced, not least because of the remote learning that took place through the Trinity term. Equally, we are aware that pupils in other years who are not taking public examinations this summer will be doing so in the near future and we will, of course, continue to ensure that they also cover the curriculum fully and expediently so that they are best placed to perform well in their exams when the time comes.

### **3. Boarders**

Those boarders who are returning to school from their home countries and need to quarantine will need to self-isolate in their boarding houses and those who have spent the holidays in the UK should return to school as planned on 6<sup>th</sup> January. Boarders will have COVID tests as soon as the facility is ready this week and they should contact their boarding house parents or Mrs Amanda Goddard (Director of Boarding) if there are any concerns. We are aware that some boarders are finding it difficult to arrange flights due to the current situation.

### **4. Protective Measures for Those in School**

Clearly, it is now even more important that we all follow the guidance regarding social distancing, wearing face coverings in communal spaces and washing hands regularly, and we will continue to enforce this with pupils (Year 7 and above) who are in school. Furthermore, unless there is a good reason not to do so, we believe that it would be helpful for pupils to wear face coverings in lessons as well. There is some inevitable mixing of pupils as they move around the site, even though we have one-way systems in place, and we will make some adjustments to the timetable to ensure that while there are fewer pupils on site, we make the best use of the space we have.

### **5. Testing**

As I explained in my last message, we are working hard to set up a rapid testing facility at school and we anticipate that the tests, with further guidance, will be supplied to us today. The tests are being provided to all secondary schools free of charge, but independent schools are currently being told to meet any additional costs of implementing this national programme which we will do from efficiencies.

Most families who have taken a test at a centre will have used a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test which, whilst thought to be most reliable, takes a day or more to produce a result because the sample is sent to a laboratory. Schools will be using lateral flow tests, also known as rapid tests, which are handheld kits which provide a result, rather like a pregnancy test, after around 30 minutes. Whilst testing is not compulsory, we very much hope that all pupils (Year 7 and above) and staff will be tested at school as soon as the opportunity arises. We understand that younger pupils will be included in testing in due course. Further details of our arrangements will follow but, in the meantime, this [leaflet](#) illustrates how the testing will work.

The purpose of the testing is to keep more pupils and staff in school safely. Previously, when a pupil or member of staff tested positive, they and their close contacts had to self-isolate at home. Going forwards:

- Anyone with a positive rapid result will need to leave school, take a confirmatory PCR test at a centre and, if this provides a positive result, they will be required to self-isolate for ten days
- Close contacts who have agreed to be tested here may continue to attend school provided they take a rapid test daily, and test negative. If they test positive, they will need to take a PCR test as above.

We will write to you with further details of arrangements as soon as we are in a position to do so.

### **6. Children of Critical Workers**

We appreciate that many parents are carrying out vital work in the community at this very difficult time, sometimes putting themselves at risk in the process. We will make provision for the children of [critical workers](#) to be supervised in school and a letter will follow with details of arrangements in the different sections of the School. If you are a critical worker, please do consider whether it is essential for your child to come into school at the start of term or whether provision could be made for them to be cared for at home. With infection currently so high in the community, we have been advised that the more children who remain at home, the greater the chance that we can drive down the number of cases locally and reopen schools fully.

### **7. Happiness First across the Community**

Unsurprisingly, the experience of the lockdown last summer taught us that pupils prefer to be in school as normal, indeed the same is true of the wider school community. Life at school is about so much more than the timetabled lessons and these broader experiences in and out of the classroom contribute to the holistic development of young people. The majority of us enjoy the company of others and added to their physical

separation from school, we are aware that children are living in an uncertain world, possibly in homes touched by COVID-19 or the economic fallout. Therefore, class teachers, tutors, heads of year, housemasters/mistresses and others will be maintaining regular contact with pupils to support their wellbeing.

If you sense that your child is struggling in any way, or indeed if you have any concerns yourself, please let us know and we will do whatever we can to provide support and assistance to the child and family.

## **8. Assemblies, Chapel Services and Co-curricular**

When we are apart, it is even more important to have those occasions which connect us all and school assemblies and chapel services will be shared. Please do encourage your child to join us – and, of course, the advantage of the current situation is that parents can join too. I understand that the Chaplain's YouTube channel in particular has quite a following!

More broadly, we will seek ways to continue to offer co-curricular activities which are so much part of life at Chigwell. For example, many of you have said how much you enjoyed the virtual concerts that took place last term and as soon as we are able to do so safely, we will resume our normal rich offering which we believe is so important to pupils' development

## **9. Looking Forward**

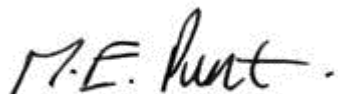
This is, of course, the most difficult part of the letter to write. We hope very much that by 18<sup>th</sup> January, all pupils will be able to return to school as normal but that will depend on the Government review of the Contingency Framework which will in turn depend on the number of COVID cases locally. Unlike last March, we are not currently in the position whereby we know that the School site will be closed to all pupils and staff for a lengthy period. Rather we believe that it is important that all staff are actively employed delivering the best education possible both remotely and to those year groups which are in school as well as dealing with various other challenges such as the setting up of testing. It is likely that we will all need to be flexible, particularly if staff become unwell themselves, but we will keep you informed as arrangements evolve.

## **10. Finally**

Thank you for all your ongoing support through these challenging times. Our focus needs to be on the provision of the best holistic support of pupils and maintaining a sense of normality in this frustrating and anxious period. I am indebted to the teaching and support staff who I know will do all that they can to ensure that Chigwell pupils have the best experience possible within the constraints of the current situation and we will work through the unknowns together. Governors too have been very supportive of plans and have provided wise counsel, and although it will not be possible for parents to come onto site in the short term, we will continue to work with you in the best interests of the young people in our care. I hope you and your families stay safe and may 2021 bring health, happiness, good fortune and sunnier days ahead.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.E. Punt'.

Michael Punt