



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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'Excellence for All'

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Re-opening Update

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you are continuing to keep safe and well and have managed to digest the government's plan unveiled yesterday of the "Roadmap for leaving lockdown."

A significant part of this plan is for the return (from 8th March), of all pupils to schools and colleges in England. School leaders were issued last night with a hefty document outlining guidance and instructions on how to facilitate this, whilst ensuring that we also offer all of our 1200 students to be tested 3 times, 3 to 5 days apart on site through an asymptomatic testing program. Although testing still remains a voluntary option to both staff and students, testing can help identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.

As you can imagine, to operate such a testing facility on an educational site is quite a challenge; to repeat this test 3 times over the course of 2 weeks whilst operating a school as near to "normal" will not be achievable on 8th March!

The Department for Education have stated that testing and the return of pupils can be phased during the first week to help manage the number of pupils passing through the test site at any one time. The Department has also allowed individual schools some flexibility on how we do this according to our own circumstances, but does state that schools should prioritise year groups 10-13 in the first instance. Our testing facility has capacity to test 350 students on a daily basis. To repeat this test 3 times for 1200 students whilst operating a 'normal school' is not possible within a one-week timescale. **I therefore envisage that during the week beginning 8th March, learning will be a blended mix of on-site and remote learning until we can test all of our students and staff.**

We are awaiting further details from the DFE on the rapid testing programme and I am taking part in a webinar tomorrow to gain more information.

On Wednesday, we will be sending out consent forms to all parents/carers. To process the test, we need to register all participating students and you will need to complete an online registration form and the required consent statement. We will need a speedy reply with regards to this as this will determine how soon we will be able to fully reopen the school to all year groups.

I will contact you again tomorrow with further information regarding the testing process and I thank you for your understanding and support with this matter.

Yours faithfully

J E Crowe
Principal

Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



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