



26th February 2021

Dear Parent or Carer,

Important Update - Wider Opening of Schools from 8 March

I hope this update finds you and your family well, and as excited as we are to know that we will be able to start welcoming more students back to school from Monday 8 March.

Whilst this is welcome news, the public health situation with COVID-19 remains very serious. Because of this we shall be very cautious in our approach and stick closely to official government guidance. This is the safest thing to do for our school and our community.

We have taken into account the new government guidance published on Monday and, by following this, we are clear that we can open safely from 8 March. However, we know the virus remains a threat. Amongst our students, our families, our staff and our wider community there are many individuals who are clinically vulnerable or in higher risk groups. Whilst it is fantastic that the vaccine is being deployed so quickly, school staff are not prioritised for jabs. The overwhelming majority of KEVICC staff will have no additional protection over the period up to the Easter holidays.

The last thing any of us want is to open our school to more students, only to have to see an increase in infections and have to ask large numbers of staff or students to isolate. Equally, we want to minimise risk to the most vulnerable in our community at all times. This is why we will reopen in the safest possible manner, following the government guidelines and recommendations wherever possible.

New Measures from 8 March

From the 8 March we will put in place two important safety measures which will be new for most students. College staff, and the 80 students who have been onsite as part of our Critical Worker and Vulnerable student programme since January, will be accustomed and used to these measures.

1. Lateral Flow Tests

Since January, we have provided lateral flow tests twice weekly for staff and students attending the site. We have now processed over 1000 of these LFTs already and are confident our system is established and working well. Both students and staff have rapidly become accustomed to and comfortable with the tests.

These tests screen for people who are carrying the virus but who have not shown symptoms ("asymptomatic"). Younger people are more likely than adults to be asymptomatic carriers of the virus.

Our on-site LFT testing centre operates from Redworth Gym. It is run by KEVICC staff under the coordination of Sharon Leighton-Boyce, who is well known to students and oversees first aid and student medical needs across the College.

The process of testing takes typically 1-2 minutes. Students are given a registration card with an individual barcode. They blow their noses, sanitise their hands, and are given a sterile swab. They then do a nasal and throat swab themselves with the assistance of a mirror, and hand the swab and their card to a member of staff. They then leave and the test is processed. We receive results typically within 30 minutes.

Should a test show as positive, we then follow the procedures we have had in place since September for young people who are either notified of a positive test or show symptoms in school. This involves contacting home as soon as possible to arrange for them to be collected, making sure they are not in contact with others whilst waiting, and confirming in writing to the parent or carer the next steps around self-isolation. Of course, at all stages, we offer reassurance to the young person and prioritise theirs and others safety.

Since January, we have identified 3 cases where tests have indicated students are carrying the virus without symptoms, and this has enabled us to ensure that these students and their close contacts can isolate safely, without potentially spreading the virus further to their peers, families and through our community.

The current plan is that students for whom we have consent will have one test in school before returning to face to face teaching, followed by two further tests in school up to the 19th March. These students will then be supplied with testing kits and guidance to do two extra tests per week at home between then and the Easter break. This will help make our wider reopening as safe as possible for our community and the vulnerable people within it.

Only students where we have consent from parent's/carer's will be required to take a Lateral Flow Test. We **strongly recommend** students are tested and very much hope you will be able to give this consent, as the more students who we can test, the safer our school and community will be.

We will need parents and carers of **all** students to complete the google form link at the end of this update to indicate their consent or otherwise.

2. Face Coverings in School

We have followed guidance from the DfE on the use of face coverings in school since September, and continue to do so. The latest DfE guidance for schools states;

Prevention

You must always:

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the school.
- 2) Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.

Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance February 2021 P7

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf

Before Christmas we followed the recommended circumstances for face coverings in schools, which was to wear them indoors in corridors and communal areas.

Since January we have asked students on site to wear them in class as an additional safety measure, and this has worked very well.

The latest guidance recommends face coverings are worn indoors including in lessons;

In addition, we now also recommend in those schools, that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons.

Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance February 2021 P12

Therefore, we will expect staff and students to wear face coverings in lessons and in all indoor communal spaces from 8 March.

Of course, some of students will be exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who;

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties

Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance February 2021 P12

If your young person falls into the above categories and is exempt from wearing face coverings, please be reassured staff will be sensitive to their needs and will be aware that the reasons for their exemption may not be visible to others.

If your young person is exempt on the grounds above, please make sure you make us aware in your response to the google form at the end of this letter and that this is received as soon as possible so we can update our records.

3. Staggered Start- Week Beginning 8 March

As a school, we are anticipating managing 2500-3000 lateral flow tests in the first 2 week period from 8 March. This is a logistical challenge for which we have been preparing since the announcement last Monday. The first of these LFTs must be taken by students before they go into their first face to face lesson.

Because of this, we will need to **stagger the return of students** beginning with some students on 8 March and ending with all students in from Friday 12 March.

We recognise that this will be frustrating to youngsters who want to be back in school as soon as possible, as well as to families, and to teachers who are eager to get back to face to face teaching. However, we have to plan to do this effectively and safely.

Students will return at different times in the week beginning 8 March according to their year group. Throughout the week we will make sure the usual full timetable of remote learning continues for year groups yet to return.

Year Groups will return as follows;

Monday 8 th March	Year 11 (from 0845) and Years 12, 13, and 14 (from 1140)
Tuesday 9 th March	Year 10 (from 0845)
Wednesday 10 th March	Year 7 (from 0845)
Thursday 11 th March	Year 8 (from 0845)
Friday 12 th March	Year 9 (from 0845)

As students arrive in on their first day back, they should use their usual entrance point to the College that they were using up until Christmas, and we will make sure we have plenty of staff on hand to get them to where they need to be.

For the week beginning 8 March, we would ask parents and carers who are critical workers to keep their young people at home if they can. Parents and carers of vulnerable students who have been attending since January will be contacted by the College next week to discuss their needs.

4. Questions, feedback and further information

We know many of you may have questions, comments or feedback for us ahead of the 8th March on the issues above or other related matters. With that in mind, we have an **online parent and carer Q and A on Monday 1st March from 6pm-7pm**. We will share the code with parents on Monday.

5. Existing Measures

Please be reassured that all of other existing safety measures continue to be in place around stopping those with symptoms attending school, maintaining excellent hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact between groups and ventilation of spaces being used.

As parents and carers, please do not to send your young person in if they are showing any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19. This will continue to be important going forward, even if they have had a recent negative lateral flow test.

6. Link for LFT Testing Consent and Face Covering Exemption

Please could we ask **all** parents and carers to complete the following form in good time for the return on 8th March. Unfortunately, for those of you with more than one young person at College we will need a separate form for each.

<https://forms.gle/oSub3JfodZz2UueY9>

Thank you for your patience in reading and digesting the content of this longer than usual update. We want you to be able to understand clearly our measures, what is new, and the rationale behind them.

Throughout this pandemic, amidst a lot of suffering, it has been amazing to see how our school community has supported each other, and how people have acted to protect the most vulnerable in our community even when that has meant making sacrifices themselves. All of us want to return to normal, and whilst we are some

way from that yet, continuing that caring and cautious approach over the next weeks and months will ensure it happens as soon as safely possible.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Salt", written in a cursive style.

Alan Salt
Principal