



SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

18 December 2020

ALL PARENTS AND CARERS

Dear Parents/Carers,

End of Term – December 2020

We have finally reached the end of the most tough, challenging and unparalleled school term in history and it is only right that I say a massive thank you to all the Summerhill staff who have worked tirelessly to keep the school open and do their very best to ensure that no student is disadvantaged despite the ravages of the pandemic. In a world where so much seems uncertain the professionalism and hard work of our staff remains a constant and I am indebted to them for the sheer determination to do the best for all of our students, all of the time. Please do not underestimate the mental energy, drive and willpower this has taken. We are totally weary of the situation but the return to any sense of normality still seems a long way off.

Government Announcement

You will have by now seen the latest announcement by the government concerning plans for Covid testing in the new year, and a staggered start for secondary schools and colleges in January. It is quite appalling that we found out about this through the BBC News and there has actually been no direct communication with schools. In truth, words fail me. The last-minute and chaotic nature of this publication is completely unacceptable and I apologise in advance for the disruption this will cause with childcare issues. Had we known in advance, we could have made better plans! It beggars belief that this announcement is being made now, right at the end of term, and after the government has spent the last few weeks refusing to contemplate the idea of remote learning and threatening schools with legal action if they dared to suggest such a move.

Start of the New Term – January 2020

Following the announcement yesterday, as it stands, this is now our plan for the new start in January:

- Monday 4 January 2020 – Staff Inset Day – school closed to all students (this was already planned)
- Tuesday 5 January through to Friday 8 January – school open to all Year 11 students for normal lessons and mock examinations (for those who have been self-isolating)
- Tuesday 5 January through to Friday 8 January – school is open to students whose parents are key workers – please see the information below. School is also open to children classed as ‘vulnerable’ and separate contact will be made with families.
- Monday 11 January – all students return to school normal time. Remote learning will be set on the Satchel One app for students in Years 7 – 10 during the first week.

FOR KEY WORKER PARENTS ONLY

To aid our staffing rotas, places must be booked IN ADVANCE, if this is required.

If you meet the ‘key worker’ definition and need this childcare support from the 5 January 2020, please email us directly to

Keeley Stone via kstone@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

with your child’s name, date of birth and year group, along with your job title and employer,

no later than midday on Monday 28th December 2020

Please indicate your need for all days individually – Tuesday 5th through to Friday 8th

Please put ‘KEY WORKERS CHILDCARE’ in the subject line. Emails to other addresses will not be monitored.

Covid Testing in Schools

There are many questions that need to be answered with regard to the proposed school Covid testing programme. These include more detail about how we are expected to have the capacity and expertise to carry out testing and exactly what financial and other support will be provided. We also need to be clear on what assurances can be given about the issue of false negative results and the implications for legal liability, and clarification about what happens at a weekend during daily testing.

We are very concerned about the feasibility of setting up a testing programme at the scale envisaged as this is a huge exercise requiring processes to be established and communicated, regular parental permission to be obtained, and doubtless innumerable other logistical issues to be overcome.

I think it also important that I clearly state now that I will resist any recommendations or directives for school staff to carry out any invasive medical procedures. They are not trained to do this.

Staff Contact

Throughout the Christmas break, I am asking staff to ensure that they switch off and enjoy much deserved time with their families. Without this well-deserved down time, we will struggle to maintain the momentum required to get us through the Spring and Summer terms in 2021. **As a result, please do not expect any responses to school emails between 2pm on Friday 18 December 2020 and 8am on Monday 4 January 2021. There is a separate Covid email address which SHOULD be used to report cases. Please see the information later in this letter.**

Year 11

We are immensely proud of our Year 11 students, the majority of whom are completing two weeks of mock exams today. Their behaviour and conduct has been tremendous and they have demonstrated that they are in a good position to go on to be very successful in their exams next summer, despite having had such great disruption to their education during the first national lockdown. We are aware that some students will continue their mocks in January as a result of having to self-isolate and we are so grateful for their resolve in this. We are so impressed by their resilience and determination to succeed in the face of the current challenges to their education, they are excellent role models for our school community! We will communicate with parents the next stage of catch up masterclasses, revision programme and the second round of mock exams after Christmas.

Notifying the School of positive Covid test results during the Christmas holiday

Unfortunately, Covid won't take a break for Christmas and if your child receives a positive Covid test result at any time then please let us know immediately, using the email address covid@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

If we are notified of a positive Covid case within our school community up to and including 23rd December and your child is identified through contact tracing as being a close contact of the affected individual, then we will advise you of the need for your child to self-isolate for 10 days from the last point of potential close contact. This is, unfortunately, a non-negotiable and is in line with the NHS track and trace procedures.

If you do have to notify the school of a positive test result for your child during the Christmas holidays, we need to have a series of questions answered. These will include the date your child was last in school, the date the test was taken, the first date that your child experienced Covid, any other positive cases or symptoms in the household and any contact with other families or individuals. This information will be sent to Public Health England.

Mr Cresswell and I will monitor the Covid email address and we will be in touch with you (either the same day or the following morning, depending on the time of notification) to undertake any contact tracing required. **Please do not use this email address for any other purpose.**

I would like to end by thanking you all for your incredible support over the past term. The kind messages from many parents have sustained me and my colleagues during some very demanding and challenging times. I think it is fair to say we have given as much as we physically can and we are doing our best to ensure the school is open and lessons are continuing.

I wish you all a restful holiday and hope that you are able to share many moments of joy with your loved ones. One positive from this pandemic is that it has reminded us all of the importance of fellowship and community, of kindness and caring for one another and of the need to cherish and appreciate the time that we can spend together.

Stay safe!

Yours sincerely

Martyn Palfreyman
Headteacher