

26 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to confirm arrangements for your child(ren) to return to Birchwood. I would like to begin by saying how impressed we have been with our students, getting up each school day and engaging with live lessons and assessments. These have been challenging times for everyone, but their attitude and perseverance has not gone unnoticed and will help them progress when they return to school.

Following the Government's announcement that all children will return to fulltime education from 8 March, there is a requirement for students to have 3 Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) spaced over their first two weeks back. We will conduct the first LFT (LFT1) and give you 2 further tests to complete at home and return the test swabs to school for processing (LFT2 & 3). Subsequent tests will be in the form of home kits – details to follow on this.

Throughout lockdown, we have used a very efficient testing system for keyworker children and we will be up-scaling this approach in order to conduct LFTs for all our 1400 students.

The date and times for each year group are shown below. Ideally, we would expect you to drive to school and park (we will be providing additional parking spaces). You will be given a LFT kit by one of our Covid Marshalls to complete with your child in the comfort of your car. You will then simply return the testing swab to the Marshall as you exit the car park. You can then return home. We will also organise a walk-in facility if you do not have access to a car. We will then process the test and only inform you if the result is positive.

We would strongly encourage all to attend the testing but we do understand some may have reservations. If you do not consent to your child having the test simply do not attend. You do not need to inform us.

Friday 5 March LFT1

- 12:00 - 14:00 Year 12/13 students

Monday 8 March LFT1

- 08:00- 09:30 Year 11
- 09:30-11:00 Year 10
- 11:00-12:30 Year 9
- 12:30-14:00 Year 8
- 14:00-15:30 Year 7

Please note: If you have more than one child at Birchwood, please attend at the time allocated for your eldest child.

In order for us to concentrate on testing, there will be no remote learning or key worker provision on Monday 8 March. This would be a good opportunity for your child to sort out their school bag, equipment and uniform. Please make sure they have their own hand sanitiser and two clean face masks as they will be expected to wear these in the classroom. By having two this means if they lose one or want to swap to a clean mask they are able to. If your child has medical exemption and is unable to wear a mask, you will need to provide documentary evidence which can be a letter from your GP or other medical professional.

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Principal - Dr Chris Ingate

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Tuesday 9 March

- 08:00 - 10:00 catch up tests for anyone who couldn't attend Monday – ideally we would prefer it if you could complete your first LFT on Monday.

On Tuesday, there will be remote learning for all but no key worker provision on site, as we need to get ready for the full return.

Wednesday 10 March

All students return to school.

In form time on Wednesday, all students will be given 2 swabs, 2 tubes, 2 bags, to bring home and it will be explained what to do with these.

Thursday 11 March

LFT2 – Just before leaving home, all students should swab throat and nose and place the swab in the tube and seal it in the bag. Writing their name on the bag. They will then bring in the swab in the tube, and the named bag and place in a Test Return box in their form room. Our LFT team will process these and only inform you if the result is positive.

Monday 15 March

LFT3 - Just before leaving home, all students should swab throat and nose and place the swab in the tube and seal it in the bag. Writing their name on the bag. They will then bring in the swab in the tube, and the named bag and place in a Test Return box in their form room. Our LFT team will process these and only inform you if the result is positive.

Thank you for your support with these important requirements. Whilst Covid infection rates are now low in our area and the vaccination programme continues to ensure the most vulnerable people are protected, we still have to operate with great caution. This is a highly infectious disease, and nobody wants a return of any form of lockdown. If you or your child develops any of the 3 main Covid-19 symptoms (A dry continuous cough, raised temperature or loss of taste or smell) you should keep your child at home, get tested and inform us of the result. At school, we will continue to use measures which worked well in the Autumn term including one-way systems, Year Group social and recreational spaces, additional cleaning and freely available hand sanitiser.

We are really looking forward to welcoming our students back – we have missed them. Our aim is to get everyone back settled and enjoying school by the Easter holidays.

Yours sincerely

Chris Ingate

Dr Chris Ingate
Principal