

18th December 2020

Dear parents/carers

My sincere apologies for writing to all parents with information to be implemented at short notice. I have done so as you will be aware from the national media that the Department for Education has made sudden and late changes in its expectations of schools when they re-open in January.

All secondary schools have been asked to operate a staggered start to the spring term. In addition, they have been asked to host testing of students and staff for COVID-19 using the new fast-acting lateral flow tests.

At UHS this means that students in years 11 and 13 will return as previously planned at the start of our term on Tuesday 5th January. Year 11 should arrive at gate 3 at 10.50am and year 13 at gate 7 for 10.55am. Students in all other year groups should remain at home and should log on to Microsoft Teams at 10.50am on Tuesday 5th January for registration with their form tutor. Online lessons will then begin period 3. Remote learning will be provided in the same way as during lockdown and periods of isolation this term.

We will also provide on-site education for our more vulnerable children and children of key workers. Members of staff from our Flexible Learning Centre will be in contact directly with some families on Tuesday 5th January to invite them into school from Wednesday 6th January. If you are a critical key worker and are unable to source care for your child during this first week of term, please contact the school office (office@uhs.org.uk) to book a place. We will confirm arrangements back to you by email.

Students in all year groups will return to school through their normal gates and at normal times on Monday 11th January.

Information is very mixed with respect to the testing opportunities and has been changing over the last few days. We are keen to hear what the final arrangements are and I will inform parents as soon as we are clear. Once up and running the aim will be to roll out regular testing to the whole school community. This will hopefully reduce the future need for self-isolation periods for staff and students where infection is identified in school.

Throughout the holiday and on our return, all students should continue to comply with the rules set out for the tier they are in, and parents are asked to help ensure their children are following these rules. This particularly includes those related to mixing with other households when they are not in school and when they are travelling to and from school.

We have been advised by Hillingdon this week that a Covid Winter Grant Scheme is available to provide support to vulnerable households and families during the winter period. The funding will be used to help meet the cost of food and utility bills.

The council is making direct payments to families in the form of supermarket vouchers (for the two-week school break). They are also inviting families to apply for a payment towards the cost of their utility bills. If you believe you are eligible for this grant and do not receive it by 21st December or would like to make enquiries about it, please contact Hillingdon directly.

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Scheme details and the form can be accessed via www.hillingdon.gov.uk/winter-grant. The contact details are:

- Phone: 01895 558200 from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- Email - wintergrant@hillingdon.gov.uk

Finally, but once again please do have a good winter break. I will update parents as soon as we have more information. Summaries and updates will also appear on our website.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N B Clemens', written over a horizontal line.

N B Clemens
Principal