

Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

Dear parents and carers,

On Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> December, I sent you a letter explaining that the school would be closed to most students at the start of the new term in January. This was based on advice from government received the day before.

The government issued further advice specifically for special schools at 6pm on New Year's Eve, stating that special schools should provide face to face education for any student whose parents and carers request this, while making it clear that there is **no requirement for children and young people of secondary age to attend school next week.**

Over the past few days there has been information shared through the press and on TV news programmes about other changes the government has made to the proposed opening of schools in other parts of the country.

At the moment I do not expect the guidance for special schools to change.

I appreciate how difficult the uncertainty around school opening is for families and want to assure you that I will do everything I can to keep you informed of any changes to government guidance or other factors which may impact on the ability of the school to open to all students.

**The decision as to whether or not to send your child to school next week will depend on many factors and will be different for each individual child and family.**

**We will contact all parents and carers on Monday to find out whether you would like your child to attend school from Tuesday.**

If you choose to keep your child at home this will be recorded as an **authorised absence** and we will provide remote learning activities for them to access. We will also provide free school meal vouchers for those children and young people who would usually be entitled to free school meals.

The school is working closely with the local authority, public health, school staff and their professional associations to ensure that we provide a safe environment for everyone to learn and work in, as we have done throughout the pandemic.

We will continue to put in place the measures recommended by the government and by public health to ensure that we comply with the appropriate infection control measures.

I feel it is important to remind you that even with the appropriate measures in place it is not possible to maintain social distancing within classrooms and that the needs of many of our students require staff to work in close physical contact. Further information on the measures the school has put in place to manage the risks posed by the covid -19 virus can be found in our risk assessment which is on the school website.

An additional measure which we will be implementing from the start of the new term is asking all students who can, to wear a face covering in all communal areas of school and on home to school transport. To support this change we will issue all students with a 'snood' face covering with the school logo on their return to school.

I apologise for the short notice and what may appear to be constantly changing information which I am providing to you, but assure you that this is due to factors outside my control. I will do everything I can to ensure that parents and carers are kept up to date with information

from government and with our progress in putting in place mass testing for staff and students.

Pastoral staff will be in contact with families tomorrow to discuss individual students returning to school and I and the senior staff team will be happy to talk to parents if you have questions or concerns which the pastoral team are unable to help with.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Hamilton,

Headteacher