

4 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

The Government has now confirmed that schools and colleges can return to face-to-face learning from 8th March. We are delighted by this news and very much look forward to welcoming our students back to campus.

We are required to test returning students for COVID-19, before they join their classes, and we therefore expect that students' return to College will be phased over the first one to two weeks to enable this to happen.

COVID-19 Testing

We know that younger people may be infected with COVID-19 but not have any symptoms of the disease. This means that they can pass on the virus to their peers, friends and families without knowing that they are infected. By testing regularly, we can identify these 'asymptomatic' students who can then self-isolate at home, until it is safe for them to return to College. I hope you will agree that this will help us to stop the spread of the disease at College and in our communities and that you will encourage your son/daughter to be tested and test themselves regularly.

All of our students will be offered three 'lateral flow tests' (LFT), one before they recommence their classes and two more tests with a period of 3-5 days between each test. Once the 3 tests are completed, students will be provided with LFT kits to test themselves at home, twice per week.

We will retain a small testing facility on our College campuses to test any students who are unable to administer their own tests at home.

The test involves taking a swab of the back of the throat and the inside of the nose. College staff will be on hand to show students how to do this.

All staff involved in testing have received full training.

Students who are over 18 can give their own consent for testing, those who are 16 or 17 must have discussed testing with their parent or guardian and we will ask about this when we test them.

No students will be tested without confirming that they have discussed testing with their parent or guardian, and consent will be required before booking a test.

To test as many students as possible before they go to their first face-to-face session, we will offer testing on Friday 5 March to Monday 8 March. There will be no

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on-site delivery of classes on these two days, so unless attending college for a COVID-19 test, students should continue to attend their remote sessions at home on these two days.

Testing will also be available on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th March at both St Helens Town Centre campus and Knowsley Stockbridge Lane Campus so please encourage your child to book in at the weekend if this is more convenient for you.

So that we can safely manage the demand for testing, students should book their own appointment on our 'Eventbrite' system. They can do this by clicking [here](#).

Information about how to book a test has been sent to student's college email, personal email and the mobile devices.

Once students have had the opportunity to have their first test, they will be able to return to their face-to-face classes. The College test centres will remain open for the next couple of weeks to allow students to book their second and third tests.

Once on-site testing is complete, students will be able to collect lateral flow tests for home testing.

Please note that these tests are only to discover students who are positive but do not have symptoms. Students who have any symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend College and should book a 'PCR test' via the Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- loss of sense of smell or taste or it's changed

Returning to College

Until Tuesday 9 March, all students should continue to access their classes remotely as per their timetables. Vulnerable students and students whose parents are key workers, who have been attending College during the lockdown, should continue to do so.

On site classes for younger students will resume from Tuesday 9 March, following the current timetables. Tutors will communicate this directly to their students.

Throughout the pandemic, we have continually been reviewing our risk assessments to provide safe learning environments and this process is on-going to ensure risk assessments follow the Government's most recent guidelines.

To keep staff and student safe we will continue to operate all of the COVID controls that we have in place including curriculum bubbles, regular handwashing, use of sanitiser, social distancing, staggered start and finish times etc.

One important change is that until the Easter holidays and in line with Government guidance, **face coverings must now be worn in all classrooms, workshops and**

communal areas. Students who are exempt should continue to carry and display their exemption cards.

Please encourage your child to wear a face covering, and the College can supply face covering to those students who require them.

Please remember that national COVID restrictions remain in place and your son or daughter should not be mixing with groups of other students outside of College.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your son/daughter's tutor – we're here to help.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

Your faithfully

Simon Pierce
Principal & CEO