

1/3/21

Dear students, parents and carers,

We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back to Larkmead following the government announcement that students will return to schools from 8 March. We are committed to helping everyone settle back into school life so that they feel safe, happy and confident. We will continue to 'focus on the positives' from remote learning, celebrating what has been achieved and supporting students to get back into the reassuring routines of school life, seeing friends and moving forward with their studies.

There are three key elements to making the return of all students a success for everyone.

### Testing

The school testing site has been up and running for some time, delivering twice-weekly tests for staff and the students in key worker school. The Larkmead team has created a welcoming and supportive environment, greatly appreciated by students and staff.

Twice-weekly testing is central to government plans to reduce the spread of corona virus. All secondary students are encouraged to take the first test before returning to school.

For the first test, students will come in to Larkmead, be tested and then go home. Students must wear a mask, but there is no need to wear uniform. Parents and students will be notified of the results that day. The year group will then return to school the next day.

We have set up the following timetable to manage the process:

Year group	of first test – students come in for then leave	Return to school
11, 12 and 13	Friday March 5	Monday March 8
9 and 10	Monday March 8	Tuesday March 9
7 and 8	Tuesday March 9	Wednesday March 10

Students will be given appointment slots for that first test, and we will share this and other information in another letter. This will be followed by a further two tests in school, building students' confidence and experience before the move to using home testing kits. Further information about home testing will follow.

Information about the tests and about consent was shared via Parent Mail in January. If you have yet to provide consent then you can do **by 3pm Wednesday 3 March** using the form previously provided. Testing is encouraged but not compulsory, and if consent is not given then students will return to school on the dates indicated above.

### Safe return

We have been really impressed by how sensibly students have settled in to the changes and measures that have been in place since September. These include staggered start and finish times, year group bubbles, split timetables, one way systems, additional sinks and hand sanitiser stations, ventilation and the compulsory wearing of masks in corridors and communal areas unless medically exempt. A reminder of these points will be shared later this week. The principle of 'hands, face, space' remains key.

The important extra step is that **from March 8 students will wear masks in class for the remainder of the term unless medically exempt**, in line with government guidance. Mask wearing supports the safety of others and is a key measure in reducing transmission. We provided all students with a Larkmead mask free of charge, and as previously, if a student does not have a mask with them then they will be directed to student services and parents charged for a replacement.

## Settled start

Our staggered start to the week enables us to manage the testing process, with one year group from each side of the split timetable coming back each day. The first period each day will be spent in tutor groups until all students return. This will help everyone settle in and provide the chance for discussion and reassurance, as well as the very welcome opportunity to catch up with friends.

The catering team will be providing cold food and jacket potatoes only on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 prior to all year groups returning.

Please note that as previously planned, **school will finish at 12.05 on Thursday 11 March** to enable us to run the Year 8 options event. This is the best approach to provide sufficient time for this important event. We appreciate your understanding over this.

We will share the plans for Year 11 and 13 students regarding GCSE and A Levels in the near future.

The Larkmead ethos of 'one community' has been a real strength from the start of this academic year, supported by that vital partnership between students, school and home. We know that, together, we will manage any challenges in the coming weeks, working to 'focus on the positives' and 'get the balance right' as everyone settles back into school successfully.

Yours faithfully



Jonathan Dennett  
Headteacher

Letter to follow will include:

- Details of timing of first test
- Reminders of routines and expectations

