



5 March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you for your patience as we finalise the arrangements for testing and reopening next week. I appreciate there is still a lot of information to take in for students and their families; please do visit our [COVID-19 page](#) of our website as a reminder of all the processes we have in place.

We have completed our most recent review of our Risk Assessment and we have spent the INSET day today training staff and looking at this in detail. Our Risk Assessment is available on [our website](#) and we have high expectations for all staff and students to follow the measures of control in place. As was the case, during Terms 1 and 2, any behaviour that contravenes hygiene, social distancing or our COVID-19 procedures and expectations, will be acted on immediately.

The two biggest changes to the way secondary schools will operate when students return are the use of lateral flow tests to identify asymptomatic cases and the extension of the use of face masks to most classrooms. In both cases, we recognise that there are legitimate arguments against these changes, but we are following the balance of the scientific evidence that has been presented by the government. There is the opportunity to opt out of testing and for students to be exempted from wearing face masks where appropriate. Both policies are also subject to government review – in the case of face masks, this will take place at Easter. In the meantime, I would strongly encourage parents to support these measures so that we continue to work together and because, above all, they are both initiatives that demonstrate our determination to protect others in our community.

Face masks

As promised, I can now confirm the use of face coverings in school when school fully reopens. Students and staff will be required to wear a mask during lessons as well as in indoor communal areas. This will remain the case at least until the government review at the end of Term 4.

Gary Lewis, The Chief Executive of the Trust, has written to all secondary headteachers in the Lighthouse Schools Partnership stating, *"I am ... asking you to take every reasonable step to ensure that there is compliance to these new tighter mitigations, especially the wearing of masks, when your schools reopen next Monday. There are exceptions relating to medical situations and I know that you will make provision so that pupils and staff with health related reasons for not wearing a mask are exempted from the requirement."* [Click here](#) to read his full letter.

Those who are exempt from wearing a face covering will be given a badge to wear on their school jumper, so that they are not unnecessarily challenged for not wearing a mask. These badges have been put in place as a supportive measure, especially for students who may be anxious about having to explain they cannot wear a mask. Students not wearing a mask, or a badge, will be asked to put on their face covering immediately.

Student Services will be able to hand out these badges to eligible students. In the case of parents who have already brought their child's exemption to our attention: their child can report to the Student Services office and they will issue them with a badge when they return to school.

A mask will not be required when:

- A student has a medical exemption.
- During periods of exertion in lessons: for example PE
- Outside on the school site (social distance must be maintained, no hugging etc.)
- Where a 2 metre social distance can be maintained. Some of our staff may choose not to wear a mask whilst teaching. This is because all classrooms have been laid out to ensure that staff have a 2 metre distance between themselves and their students. However, some will choose to wear a face mask in their classrooms and, of course, staff will be wearing a face mask when they cannot maintain a 2 metre distance from others.

It is recommended that students bring a spare mask with them to school as Government guidance states "Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Staff and pupils may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day."

COVID-19 Lateral Flow Testing

We [wrote to parents](#) earlier this week confirming the schedule for testing which begins next week. Your child will need to wear a face mask, as they will be in an indoor area of the school.

The Testing Team will contact parents swiftly if their child's test returns a positive result so they can self-isolate. Currently negative results will not be reported to parents (no news is good news), but we hope to be able to link up with the NHS Test and Trace alert system which would mean parents will receive a text message informing them of their child's test result (positive or negative). We will update parents if and when we can bring this system in.

In order to help us with this task, please could we ask parents to make sure that they have completed the [new](#) testing consent form which has superseded the old one sent out earlier this year. This is important as the new form has an added statement regarding informing NHS Test and Trace to which you are asked to give consent. You can access the new consent form [here](#).

The schedule of testing will continue over the next few weeks with students leaving lessons to undertake testing during their tutor group slot. Again should your child receive a positive result, we will contact you promptly so they can be collected to enter self-isolation as per the Public Health England guidelines.

A reminder that we will be continuing with contact tracing; which means that close contacts of someone testing positive for COVID-19 will be identified and asked to complete a period of self-isolation.

The Government announced this week that "households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, can test themselves twice every week at home". [Click here](#) to find out more, and how to access tests for adults in your household should you so wish.

I am aware that there are still a number of things to update parents on over the next week or so including more information on exam gradings this summer and moving to 'at home COVID-19 testing' for students. We will update parents/carers on these shortly.

Ofqual and grading for GCSE, AS, A level and vocational qualifications

We sent you the summary of Ofqual's decisions last week and we are now working to create Backwell's system for implementing them. We will talk in next Tuesday's assemblies directly to Years 11, 12 and 13, but we would encourage you in the meantime to share these key points of reassurance:

- Grades will be awarded by the school not by an algorithm.
- Students work from the start of the course until now will be recognised.
- There will still be significant assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate further progress.
- Students will not be faced with immediate tests or exams on their return. The new assessments will take place in Term 5.
- Term 5 assessments will take place in class time not in the sports hall or other examination venue.

We look forward to welcoming students back to school next week. It will be a Week 1B and remote learning will continue for those learning at home until each year group returns to the school site.

I would like to finish this week by sending my congratulations to the students who have been working in school over the last eight weeks. It has been uplifting to get to know them better and to see their enthusiasm and determination.

Mr J Nunes
Headteacher

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OTHER MESSAGES ...

Notice re testing of students who have tested positive within the last 90 days

With regard to the lateral flow tests to be conducted at school when students start their return next week. The school has received guidance to say that if a student or staff member has recently (within 90 days) had a positive PCR test for COVID-19, they are likely to have developed some immunity, and this immunity could lead to a positive result from the test when they are in fact no longer contagious. Therefore, we can confirm that students will not be tested at school or home within 90 days of the positive result, unless they develop new symptoms. We would, however, expect them to join in with the regular testing schedule once the 90 days have passed.

If this applies to your child, could you please let the school know via mailbox@backwellschool.net, so that we can add them to the list of students who will not be tested immediately upon their return. So for example, if your child tested positive on 23 December 2020, they would be exempt from testing during week beginning 8 March, but could take part in the testing programme from 23 March 2021.

Year 11 students who have applied to Backwell Sixth Form

All Year 11 students who have applied for Backwell Sixth Form for September 2021 entry will receive their offer letters during tutor time when they return to school next week. If your child does not receive their letter, please contact Mrs Bangham, Sixth Form Administrator, via telephone or email.

Year 13 Leavers

We cannot yet confirm the Leaving Date for Year 13 students. They should not therefore be booking holidays before mid-July. The venue for the Leavers' Ball (Ashton Gate Stadium) is provisionally booked for the beginning of July (date TBC). In line with the Government's 'Road Map' and all restrictions being lifted on 21 June, we are hopeful that the Ball can go ahead as planned and we really want as many students as possible to be there.

A message from the PE department

Boys PE - Students have been set FROG homework to let them know what PE activity they will be starting on when they come back to school and the kit that will be required.

Girls PE - Girls in Years 7-10 will need rugby kit: Backwell PE top, Backwell fleece, studded boots (wear trainers to school and carry boots), black bottoms (leggings/tracksuit bottoms/shorts) and socks. They will also need to ensure they have spare uniform as they may get muddy during the lesson. A carrier bag to put muddy boots and clothes in would be very useful!

Year 11 girls will need Netball kit: Backwell PE top, Backwell fleece, trainers and black bottoms.

On the days they have PE all students are still required to wear PE kit to school.

After-school Activities

We are pleased to confirm that after-school activities will resume from Monday 15 March. The school website will be updated with the Sports, Performing Arts and Clubs information next week.

For the majority of clubs, those who have already signed up should continue to attend as per usual – there is no need to enrol again with Student Services. There will be some new clubs, however, which will require enrolment.

Careers Bulletin

Please find below a link to the Careers Bulletin on our school website. This bulletin includes a section on online and virtual careers resources, including the school's online careers platform, Unifrog.

[Current Careers Events and Opportunities \(5 March 2021\)](#)

If you have any queries regarding future plans Mrs Ball can be contacted on her school email cball@backwellschool.net.

Backwell Voices ...

Please take a moment to listen to our fantastic school choir, Backwell Voices, performing 'Hold My Hand' by Jess Glynn ... they have been continuing weekly rehearsals during lockdown in Term 3.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5r5IHtkqII>



Upcoming Events

Thursday 18 March	Year 7 Parents' Evening
Thursday 25 March	Year 11 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 31 March	Year 13 Parents' Evening
Thursday 1 April	Last day of Term 4 (Inset moved to 5 March)
Monday 19 April	Start of Term 5

LETTERS HOME ...

[Details of Covid testing and consent prior to return to school](#) – All Parents/Carers
(including testing schedule for tutor groups: 8 – 12 March)

[Sixth Form Bulletin \(week commencing 8 March 2021\)](#) - Parents/Carers of Sixth Form students

[Year 7 Parents' Evening: Thursday 18 March](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 7 students

[Letter from CEO of LSP to Headteachers at LSP Secondary Schools](#)– All Parents/Carers