

31st March 2021

Dear parents and carers

As we reach the end of another very challenging term, I wanted to reflect on all that has been achieved both in school and at home over the last couple of months. I appreciate that it has been tough for everyone, and I am very grateful for all that you have done as parents and carers to support your children at home and to enable teaching and learning to continue. A big thank you from myself and all the staff in our schools.

It has been a delight to see children back in school since 8th March and I have been so impressed by the way that they have settled back into routines and enjoyed being with their peers. We have continued to review and update our risk assessments and testing arrangements are now well established for staff and students in our secondary schools and for staff in our primary schools. As you would expect we have still had a small number of positive cases across our schools but these have been closely monitored and no doubt there will continue to be instances as we move through the next phase of the pandemic. If you require any further information, the DfE has amended and collated [guidance](#) for parents on attending school at the moment.

Testing and contact tracing over the holidays

As we go into the Easter holidays, for secondary school students, please do continue to test twice weekly whilst away from school and before returning to school after the break. For primary and secondary school students, if your child does get a positive result after the end of term, you need to inform the school when they developed symptoms or were asymptomatic but tested positive within 48 hours of last being in school. If a child tests positive more than 48 hours since being in school, please follow the contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace and let the school know if your child will still be self-isolating when settings return.

It is also worth noting that parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now able to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment of £500, if they meet the eligibility criteria. Parents and carers should apply to their local authority where they live (rather than where the school is

located if this is different) to receive a payment. Eligibility criteria and further information on the grant is available [here](#).

Access to digital devices

Many of you will be aware of the campaign we ran in January to request donations of any IT devices or funds to help the students in our schools who were struggling to access online learning due to a lack of technology. The response from local businesses and families was phenomenal and we received almost 100 devices and significant donations that we were able to pass on to our students who were most in need. This has made such a difference to many families and enabled all children to access online learning and make progress whilst at home. We would like to pass on our sincere thanks to everyone within our school community who contributed in any way to this campaign. It is at times like these that I feel particularly grateful to be part of such a supportive and caring family of schools.

SAT's, GCSE's and A levels

The announcement on the 5th January by the Prime Minister, when he '*cancelled*' this year's exams, was disappointing I know for us all. It was particularly challenging as there was little indication of how the grading process would be carried out in its place.

This has led to a period of several weeks where schools, students and parents have been left entirely 'in limbo' whilst OFQUAL engage in a consultation around proposals. We now know that schools and teachers are required to submit centre assessed grades by the 18th June. In doing so we are deeply conscious of the need to support our young people while recognising the importance of ensuring that we retain professional integrity. Our secondary schools are having to carry out a range of assessments and moderation exercises to ensure that the centre assessed grades are robust and rooted in evidence. In primary schools, although there will be no formal SATs this year, we will continue to hand assessment information on to secondary schools and within schools to ensure a smooth transition for children.

I hope that you and your families have a happy and safe break over Easter and we are looking forward to seeing everyone back in school for the summer term.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Blundell
Executive Principal, Cathedral Schools Trust