

24 February 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Return to school from 8 March

Please find below details of our plans for the re-opening of the school in March. We have taken into account the guidance from Government, as well as the Health and Safety Executive to minimise, where possible, the risks as we see them to welcoming back the whole school community. The guidance document from the Government can be found here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf should you wish to refer to it. Our amended risk assessment in relation to COVID-19 can be viewed by clicking [here](#). Some of the information in this letter will be a repetition of the information I shared with you in September, but there are some key changes.

If you have any questions please email school@wealdgs.org so that we can get back to you.

Key dates for return to school:

Friday 5 March:	Key worker students to be tested at Tonbridge Period 5: No lessons in order to facilitate staff training in advance of return
Monday 8 March:	In school testing for students in Year 13, 12 and 11 Online lessons for students in Year 10, 9, 8 and 7
Tuesday 9 March:	In school testing for Year 10, 9, 8 and 7 Online lessons for Year 13, 12 and 11
Wednesday 10 March:	Face to Face lessons commence at school

Our onsite key worker provision will continue at Tonbridge until Wednesday 10 March, when all students will return to their normal class.

Lateral Flow Testing prior to school re-opening

The guidance from the government sets out that secondary students should return to face to face lessons in school once they have a negative Lateral Flow Test result (if you do not consent to your child participating in Lateral Flow Testing, they will return in line with the school plan for their year group).

We will be holding two testing days to facilitate testing prior to lessons commencing on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 March. Students will be tested in the sports hall at their normal campus location. I do, however, need your support to run these days. In addition to the staff we have trained to run our testing centres, we need an additional 15-20 adults (to be based between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge) to support our trained staff on the testing days.

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Weald of Kent Grammar School Academy Trust

Charity, incorporated in England and Wales
Registration Number 7451660, Limited by Guarantee

The roles would include supervision of students on arrival, managing the movement around the test centre and providing practical support on the day. They would be full-days, starting at 8am and finishing by 5pm (with a lunch break) for which we would pay £10 per hour. If you are able to offer to support, do please contact HR@wealdgs.org.

Students will be sent a 30-minute appointment window to attend the test centre, take their Lateral Flow Test and then return home. It is imperative to the smooth running of the testing days that students arrive at their allocated appointment time, and then make their way home immediately afterwards. Any students who test positive would be contacted, via parents and carers, at home and asked to isolate and book a PCR test. The rest of the school community would then be able to return to their respective campus on Wednesday 10 March. We will not contact if the test is negative, so on this occasion no news is good news!

On the day that your child is being tested, there will be no live lessons, we suggest students use any time they have around their testing appointment to revise an area of study, or to engage with some physical activity.

Once the initial testing has taken place, we are then required to test each student twice more, before the responsibility for testing moves to families. We will retain a small testing centre on each campus for any families who are unable to undertake these at home tests, do contact school@wealdgs.org if you require support with ongoing testing of your children.

Consent forms

I have attached the consent form for Lateral Flow Testing to this communication, if you have not yet returned the form could you please do so no later than Monday 1 March 2021 to COVID@wealdgs.org. To confirm, if we do not have consent to test students, they will return to lessons on Wednesday 10 March, and will not be invited to attend the two additional in school testing sessions.

Please note, if your child is in year 7 and is not yet 12 years old, their test will be administered by a member of school staff as outlined in the guidance from government. Giving your consent to testing in this case means you are consenting to us allocating an appropriate member of staff to carry this out.

Face Masks

In line with the new guidance from the government, students will be required to wear face masks in classrooms, as well as all indoor communal areas. We understand this guidance will be reviewed at Easter, we will of course update you with any change to this guidance. Students should have with them at least two masks to wear during the school day, plus any additional masks required for travel to and from school. As the school has a clearly marked area for staff in classrooms that is 2m away from students, the wearing of masks in classrooms will be optional for staff.

We would appreciate your support reviewing the diagrams below showing the correct way to apply and remove a face mask.

HOW TO WEAR A NON-MEDICAL FABRIC MASK SAFELY

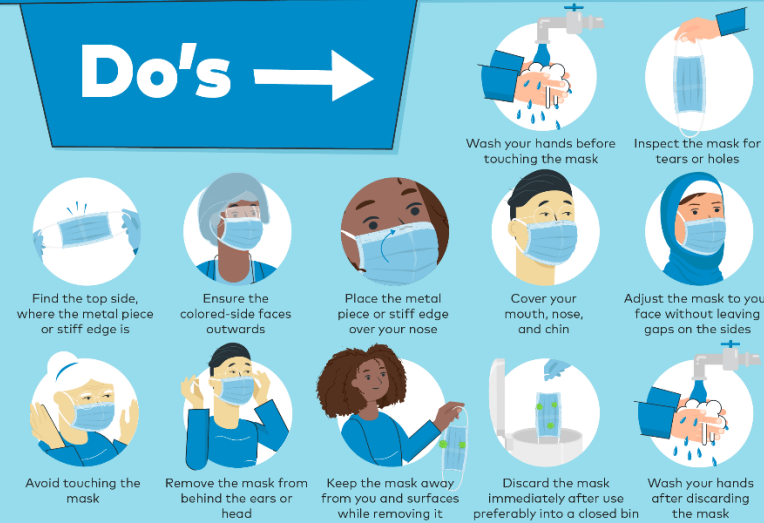
who.int/epi-win

Do's →



HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

Do's →



Remember that masks alone cannot protect you from COVID-19. Maintain at least 1 metre distance from others and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, even while wearing a mask.

who.int/epi-win



We understand that not all members of our community are able to wear a face mask. If this applies to your child please contact school@wealdgs.org and we will make a lanyard available for them to collect from reception, any member of the school community unable to wear a mask will be issued with a lanyard. Wearing the lanyard means they will not be asked about the lack of mask when moving about the school.

GCSE and A-Level exams

We are waiting for guidance on the way in which these grades will be allocated, we will share this as soon as we are able.

Attendance at school

- If your child is unwell, do not send them to school.
- If anyone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19, you must all isolate and then contact NHS test and trace without delay. Please ensure you contact the school.
- If your child develops symptoms at school, they will be isolated, and you must come immediately to collect them.

Please see the link attached for the government guidance on COVID-19 symptoms <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

From Monday 8 March, it is the expectation of the government that all students, aside from those isolating or shielding (where advised to do so by a doctor) in response to COVID-19, all students are expected to physically attend school.

Test and Trace

The school will provide, if asked, contact details of any students or staff who NHS Test and Trace believe have come into contact with COVID-19. We will comply fully with any instructions given by Test and Trace and/or Public Health England. For example, in relation to closing the school campuses or restricting access to certain year groups.

Uniform

All students in Years 7-11 are expected to attend school in full school uniform from their first day back to lessons. For full details of uniform expectations please see the school website <https://www.wealdofkent.kent.sch.uk/about/uniform> (please ensure you are using the information for September 2020). We are happy to for students to wear their summer dresses if they prefer.

We have also relaxed the rules about shoes, for students in year 7-11 we request they wear black shoes, trainers are acceptable as we appreciate many will be walking to and from school.

If your child does not have a uniform to wear, and you are unable to source replacement uniform, do contact school@wealdgs.org and we will work with you to overcome any issues. Our main priority is student attendance at school.

Sixth form students should take note of the Sixth form dress code, again the expectations about shoes are as above although there is no colour restriction.

Students should continue to wear their PE kit to school on the days they have core PE lessons, and for GCSE and A Level PE on the days when they will be undertaking practical PE. Kits should not be left at school. Students should bring a change of clothes in their school bag in case they need to change after PE (for example in the event of rain), these do not need to be school uniform. We do not expect all students to change after PE lessons.

The guidance from government states:

“Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal”

Lockers and bags

There is no change in relation to the use of lockers, in order to reduce movement around the school site and congestion in key areas, we will not be using lockers when we return to school. Students will need a sensible, waterproof bag to carry their books and lesson materials in.

In order to manage the weight of the bags (especially amongst our Key Stage Three students who do tend to carry everything with them) we suggest you set aside an area at home where school things can be kept and encourage your child to get into the habit of sorting out their bag the night before school, leaving behind anything they do not need.

Timing of the school day

The school day will run as normal, with students expected to be in their form bases by 8.40am. The school day will end for Key Stage Three at 3.35pm, and for the rest of the school at 3.40pm in order to reduce congestion at the gate.

Students should make their way immediately to food collection points to collect breakfast or to form rooms when they arrive at school in the morning.

Transport to and from school

The Government guidance asks us to “*encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if at all possible*”. The aim of this is to reduce the number of users of public transport.

We appreciate that for many of you, public transport is the only viable method of getting to and from school, so we would ask you to read and be aware of the guidance in relation to this. You can access this information here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>. Please note that anyone using public transport will need to wear a face-covering, parents and carers will need to provide these. Masks will need to be removed before entering the school building and stored in a plastic bag for the duration of the day, with another available to wear home again. This means students using public transport will need at least 2 additional masks per day in excess of the masks required for lessons.

If you are able to make alternative travel arrangements, we would encourage you to do so.

Delivery of the curriculum

We remain committed to delivering a full, broad and balanced curriculum to all students, but are also mindful of the need to protect our students, staff and families as far as we are able. Therefore, we will be operating the school in five main bubbles, designed to reduce the contacts that students and staff have during the school day.

These bubbles are:

Year 7, 8 and 9 Tonbridge
Year 7, 8 and 9 Sevenoaks
Year 10 and 11 Tonbridge
Year 10 Sevenoaks
Year 12 and 13 Tonbridge

Within bubbles, specialist spaces will be shared (for example the use of Computer, Science and Art rooms) and lessons will all be delivered by subject specialists. We have reduced as much as possible staff movement between bubbles in order to minimise the risk of potential transmission between these groups and campus locations. This does mean that in a few cases lessons will be

broadcast between the two campuses via Teams, on these occasions the students will have a teacher physically with them to support them to complete the work as directed by the subject specialist on Teams.

Each bubble has an allocated a group of rooms to use and, in the case of Key Stage Three (years 7, 8 and 9), the vast majority lessons will be delivered in the same base room. Students will need to leave their bubbles to use subject specialist spaces in DT, Drama, Computing, Science and PE.

As a result of this, our new risk assessment considers the risk of transmission between classes in Key Stage Three, or Year groups at Key Stage Four and Five unlikely. This means the number of students asked to isolate in the event of a positive case will be a form group at Key Stage Three and a year bubble at Key Stage Four or Five (plus any known contacts).

Building works at both campus locations

As you are aware, we have development projects in operation at both campus locations at the moment. If we need to move form or teaching rooms, form tutors will let students know by email.

Lunch and Break arrangements

Students will have allocated food collection points from which they can purchase food made by our dining room. Finger print scanners will not be used, instead students will give their names at the till. Food is to be taken away from the collection points and eaten either in form bases (which are listed below) or in the designated outside spaces when weather permits.

Please note, for the first few weeks, the year 8 food collection point at Tonbridge has been moved to a screened area of the dining room in order to accommodate the testing centre. Once we have completed the first three tests for all students, they will be able to return to their usual space on the Mezz.

Marking and feedback

Each department has planned an assessment and feedback model that they are already operating within lessons, this will continue when we return to school in person.

Wellbeing

We are aware the period of shutdown, and the return to school, has resulted in anxiety and stress in some members of our community. Our counselling team are working with student services and the head of year teams to ensure any student needing support is able to access it. If you have concerns about your child, do please contact their form tutor.

Consultation Evening and other meetings

We will not be physically welcoming parents, carers or other visitors onto the school site in person, unless there is an imminent safeguarding reason to do so.

In person consultation evenings will be suspended, with subject teachers emailing parents and carers an update on the progress of their child. We anticipate that in most cases any questions from parents and carers can be answered by email, however, if there is a particular need to meet, this can be facilitated via Teams. The school is able to invite parents and carers to attend Teams meetings without the necessity for parents and carers to have the programme installed on their device as it can be accessed via a web-browser.

Cleaning

We have been working with our new cleaning company since the summer, they have been doing a marvellous job keeping the site clean and therefore all of us safe. In addition, we have recruited a housekeeper for each campus. They are working as part of the site team to ensure regular cleaning during the day, and also replenish soap and sanitiser. In addition, we have invested in two anti-viral fogging machine one for each campus, in order for us to clean areas of the school accessed by multiple bubble groups.

Clubs and societies

We will review our ability to operate clubs and societies as the term progresses and in line with the easing of lockdown across the country. We are aware of the positive benefits of participation in clubs and societies, and are keen to re-establish these as soon as our risk assessment allows.

Peripatetic Music Lessons

We are aiming to re-commence peripatetic music lessons after the Easter break, with staff having access to Lateral Flow Testing on the days they are in school.

External Lettings of the School Campuses

All external lettings will be subject to government guidance on the easing of lockdown and our own risk assessment, and will only take place when activities are permitted and if allowing them maintains the health and safety protocols in place for our students and staff during the normal school day.

Risk Assessment

If you would like to read our risk assessment in relation to re-opening the school in September, it is on our website and can be accessed via this link: <https://www.wealdofkent.kent.sch.uk/about/school-re-opening>. Please be aware, our risk assessment is an evolving document and our assessment of risks, plus actions required, will vary as further information comes out from the government.

I would like to end with a thank you. I do hope this is the last lockdown we need to enter into, and that we can now, at last, look forward to re-establishing some kind of normal. However, we remain ready to reinstate online learning should we need to do so. The move to an online school has only been possible as a result of the combined efforts of staff planning, delivering and supporting this to happen; parents and carers providing the space, time and support for students to participate in their lessons and our wonderful students who have, as ever, risen to the challenge with admirable grit and determination.

We are looking forward to seeing students in person again very soon, and I will write to confirm the method we will be using to test all students before lessons commence as soon as possible.

Take care.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs E Bone
Headteacher