



SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE SCHOOL

A CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS AGED 11-19

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18th December 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Re: Government Announcements affecting Secondary Schools

I had hoped that last minute announcements by the government that affect your child were a thing of the past. However, with the latest announcement regarding staggered returns and mass testing, we once again find ourselves on the back foot.

The lateness of these announcement means that schools have no time to prepare for mass testing to commence on the 4th January. The logistics around mass testing for schools are huge. As a school we have a number of questions that require answers as to how school should proceed with the testing. For example, testing kits are not due to arrive in school until the week commencing 4th Jan (there is no specific date for this yet). We would also need to re-timetable rooms to allow us to have a space that meets the Government's specifications. This will mean moving classes, disrupting learning, as well as the need for between 5 and 9 additional staff to administer the test. This would be either existing staff, for which we have no capacity, or we will need to safely recruit volunteers. We will also need to train staff who would be administering tests, and of course we need to seek consent from you in order to administer the tests. It may well be that I write to you again in January asking if any parents would be able to assist with any testing programme. These operational challenges mean that testing will not be in place on 4th January as the Government are suggesting.

The Government have also suggested that we should stagger the return of all year groups with only Year 11 and Year 13 returning on the first day of term. I have asked the DfE whether this is a recommendation or a directive. It is unclear whether this is to reduce infections picked up over the break or to accommodate mass testing. We have managed COVID well so far and our numbers of positive cases are extremely low. Therefore, to keep students out of school unnecessarily is something we wish to avoid.



We obviously want to keep all members of the school community safe, and feel that a calm and measured approach is needed. We will not rush in to any decisions until we are clear that we have capacity and understand all implications of what mass testing means for us. As a school, our measures have meant that students' learning has been largely uninterrupted, and now is not the time for rushed and reactive decisions.

I will communicate again by the 30th December regarding the staggered return and how this affects your child.

In the meantime, try and have a restful Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

Neale Pledger
Headteacher

