

RC/JAE

23 February 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

Please see below a summary of the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday and the subsequent Department for Education guidance on the reopening of schools. Later this week, I will be issuing specific details regarding the return to school for all students at Portchester Community School.

The tests referred to in the information below are 'Lateral Flow Tests' – these are a rapid result COVID-19 screening test using a nose and throat swab. Most of the students will complete the testing by themselves. Parents and carers will need to complete an online consent form before testing starts and the staggered return to school begins.

8 March 2021 secondary school reopening guidance

Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed the plans in Parliament yesterday.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published updated guidance for schools.

Here is what we learned from the documents:

1. Attendance is 'mandatory' for all students

The DfE's guidance states that school attendance will be 'mandatory for all pupils from 8 March 2021'. The usual rules on attendance will apply, including parents' legal duty to secure their child's attendance at school. The ability to issue sanctions, such as fines will also be reinstated.

2. Three on-site tests for secondary students

Returning secondary students will be tested three times on site and, then again, once at home in the first two weeks after reopening. They will then be provided with home kits for twice weekly testing thereafter. During the week of 8 March 2021, students will only be expected to return following their first negative test result.

3. Face coverings in secondary classrooms

The government confirmed today that it is recommending that the use of face coverings in secondary schools be extended to all indoor environments, 'including classrooms', for a 'limited period' until Easter. DfE guidance published yesterday confirms that schools should 'ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances'. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering 'would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example, in PE lessons', the DfE said.

4. Consider 'staggered starts' or adjusted finish times

The guidance states that schools should 'consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave'. However, this 'should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time'.

5. Close contacts must self-isolate

The guidance confirms that schools must send home anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, 'advising them to self-isolate immediately and for the next 10 full days counting from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive'.

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6. Change to definition of an 'outbreak'

The latest guidance states that schools with two or more confirmed cases within 14 days may have an 'outbreak' and should call the dedicated advice service via the DfE's helpline. Previously, the guidance stated that two or more cases within 10 days may be considered to have an outbreak.

7. No rotas or class size reductions

Schools 'should not plan for rotas as there is no requirement to reduce occupancy in schools', the guidance states. There is also 'no need for class sizes to be adjusted from the usual size', the DfE said.

8. CEV pupils and staff to stay away

According to the DfE, although children are 'gradually being removed' from the shielding patients list, those who are confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable should 'shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice'. 'They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally', the guidance goes on to say. In its roadmap, the government has said it 'anticipates that it will no longer be necessary to advise shielding beyond the end of March 2021'.

9. Provide meals as usual

School kitchens are expected to be 'fully open' and providing food for students, including those eligible for free school meals.

10. Remote education requirements still in force

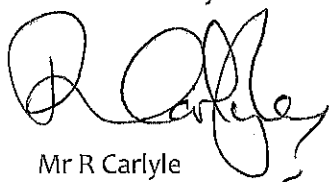
Although attendance will be mandatory from 8 March 2021, schools will still be required, by law, to provide remote education to any students who need to continue to learn from home.

'This includes, for example, where such guidance means that a class, group or small number of students need to self-isolate or that clinically extremely vulnerable children are to shield', the guidance states.

I hope this has given you a flavour of the information to come. We are all very excited about welcoming the children back in school again. More detailed information will be issued soon.

Thank you for your sustained support.

Yours sincerely



Mr R Carlyle
Headteacher