

SJO/AT

25th February 2021

Dear parents and carers,

On Monday 22 February the Prime Minister made an announcement that schools would be able to open to all students from 8 March. We were delighted with the decision and we are looking forward to welcoming all students back to full time education. Returning to school is vital for young people's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for young people's cognitive, social and academic development, no matter how hard teachers work to provide remote learning.

When students come back to school in March, they will return to their normal classes, and they will be taught by specialist teachers. We have made a commitment to ensure that all subjects and timetabling will continue as normal. There will be no narrowing of the curriculum, although some aspects of practical work are still not permitted. We will be able to organise extra-curricular activities and details of these will follow once students have returned.

As part of their opening plans, schools are instructed that they must all follow guidance to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. A copy of our risk assessment is on our website for your reference. In order to meet the health and safety guidance, we will be maintaining the systems that were in place in the Autumn Term. This means that, whilst class sizes will return to normal, all students will be expected to sit in rows facing the front of the class at all times. In addition, some social distancing is still required. From 8 March all students will be expected to wear face coverings in lessons as well as in corridors and circulation spaces. They must also follow the one-way system and spend recess times with their year group in their designated area. Students will be expected to continue to use hand sanitiser as they move from one space to another, and we will be ventilating the classrooms and communal areas as much as possible.

You will have seen in the media that in order for students to return to school, they are expected to undertake lateral flow tests, each one being 3 to 5 days apart. The first test should be taken before they start back in their lessons. This testing programme is not compulsory, and consent must be given. However, it is strongly recommended because the tests identify asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 and participating in this programme will help us reduce the risk of transmission. We will be conducting the first three tests in school and then students will be expected to take the test at home after this. To allow the testing to be undertaken, we will be staggering the start of the return to school for different year groups.

1. Monday 8 March – Y11 and Y10 will be invited in for their test, and they then return to lessons.
2. Tuesday 9 March – Y12, Y13 and Y8 (our largest year group) will be invited in for their test, and they then return to lessons.
3. Wednesday 10 March – Y9 and Y7 will be invited in for their test, and they then return to lessons.

More details will follow from Mr Read who is coordinating this part of the return plan. Students will receive remote learning up until the day they return.

I know that you will have many questions about the full opening plan. To help, some further guidance is given below:

1. Transport to and from school: All buses will return to normal. Devon County Council is responsible for transporting students to and from school if they qualify for a bus pass. Students should follow good hand hygiene when they travel on a bus by using hand sanitiser and good respiratory hygiene by wearing a face covering. This applies to school buses as well as public buses. Bus drivers may refuse to carry students who do not comply with these rules. Where possible, students should cycle or walk to school if they live close enough. Cars must not park on the school site unless by prior arrangement, for example for students with disabilities.

Together; we care, we challenge, we excel

2. Attendance: This is compulsory for all students unless they are classified as clinically extremely vulnerable. A letter will have been sent from the Department of Health and Social Care if this applies. Please contact your child's Head of Year if issues arise with attendance, as we may be able to resolve them by working with you. Students MUST NOT attend school if they have symptoms of coronavirus. If anyone in your household is instructed to self-isolate, or if anyone tests positive for coronavirus you MUST inform us as soon as possible.
3. Uniform: Students are expected to attend in full uniform when they return. There is no longer any need to clean clothes more regularly than normal. To reduce time spent in the changing rooms, students may attend school or leave school in their PE or Dance kit if they have these subjects during the day. If it is raining however uniform should be brought to school to change into under controlled conditions.
4. Food: Hot food will be available for students to purchase at recess times. The range will be limited as we can only supply covered food. However, if possible, students should bring packed lunch instead. Students must bring their own water bottle which can be filled during the day. We will not be supplying cups.
5. Personal equipment: Students will be expected to provide their own basic equipment (pen, pencil, ruler and eraser) as normal. However, as we will not be able to lend equipment, students should also bring their own safety scissors, glue sticks (if required), and colouring pencils for subjects such as Art. Students should bring their own calculator for Science and Mathematics. If parents are in receipt of free school meals, we will be able to assist with these items. Please send a message to office@tavistockcollege.org if you need any help.
6. Gatherings and meetings: No visitors will be permitted on site and there will be no meetings. Virtual meetings will continue to replace face to face meetings.
7. Behaviour expectations: Our behaviour policy has been updated during this period. Anyone who compromises the health and safety of others will be subject to the strict application of additional sanctions. However, we will be organising additional support for students who are going to find the transition back to school challenging. Please do not be cautious about approaching your child's Head of Year if you think you might need some support.
8. Examinations for Y11 and 13: We are still waiting on the details of the Government's plans for GCSE's, BTEC and A levels, but the Secretary of State for Education announced yesterday that teacher assessed grades will be used this year. Further details will follow when we have more information. We plan to run some assessments after the Easter break once students have settled back into school life.

We know that some students will feel they have fallen behind, and we also know some have made greater progress than anticipated as a result of one to one tuition at home. Some students have engaged in alternative learning and this has done them no harm at all. Many students have worked extremely hard and we have been very proud of their efforts. Please try not to worry about where your children 'should be' with their learning. We have systems in place to help diagnose gaps and we know how to accelerate learning. In addition, we understand there will be additional funding for tutoring from the government and we will let you know when this is available.

My staff have continued to work hard throughout this crisis. We may not have got everything right all of the time, but the circumstances have been quite unique. Thank you also for the kind emails and letters of support we have received over the last few weeks.

You may have additional questions. Please send any queries to office@tavistockcollege.org. This email address is checked regularly.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Jones
Principal