



28<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please excuse the delay from the usual Friday correspondence. As Lenin once said, *“there are decades where nothing happens and there are weeks where decades happen”*; last week was one of those weeks in education and we want to ensure that our communications to you are as ‘full’ and clear as possible.

As a result, this is a long letter; I have therefore not fully explained all the background reasoning for our position on a number of these issues and intend to share a video to explain these in more depth in the next couple of days. Also, to save repetition, I will not repeat the messages from my video message earlier in the week. If you haven’t seen it, it is here:

<https://vimeo.com/515875397/f569d24246>

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### **Wider re-opening of schools and mass testing from 8<sup>th</sup> March**

We will be welcoming students back to school according to the following schedule. All students (where consent is gained) must have a first test confirmed as negative before returning to classrooms. To make this process manageable for a school our size, we will be staggering our return across the week of 8<sup>th</sup> March.

	<b>First Test Date</b>	<b>Full return to school</b>
Year 13	Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
Year 12	Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
Year 11	Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March
Year 10	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March
Year 9	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> March	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> March

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Year 8	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> March
Year 7	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March

On the days where students take their first test, students will come onto site for their test and immediately return home again, prior to a full return to school the following day. They are not required to wear school uniform when they come into school briefly on this first 'test' day.

On this day and on any other day before the full return to school, remote learning will continue (students will, of course, be excused for the period where they are travelling to/ from school to get their test).

Year 12 and 13 are asked to attend their test appointments on Saturdays - this enables them to return to the classroom from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March and not miss any learning time for their tests. We will be communicating with them directly to ask them to identify any times on the Saturdays where a few may not be available (e.g. due to part-time work) so that we can schedule their appointment times accordingly.

All students will be allocated a 'test appointment time'. This will be emailed to students and parents prior to the day of their first test. Students will then attend at the same time on the two subsequent weeks to take their second and third tests (they will briefly come out of lessons in order to do so) - this will make it easier for students to remember their appointment time, minimise the impact on lessons and simplify the already challenging planning. For the few students unable to attend their test time, there will be an 'after school catch up' slot on the same day, but it is essential that students attend at their allocated time wherever possible.

### **Consent for testing - action needed from all parents/ carers**

I have an apology to make regarding consent, especially given the brilliant response to my request to complete the consent form in my video message earlier in the week and the VERY high consent rate (over 97.5%), for which many thanks.

Unfortunately, new guidance from this week states that the consent given for testing needs to include permission for the sharing of parents' personal information with NHS Test and Trace. This was not included in the original 'consent template' shared by the DfE. We therefore need to ask ALL parents/ carers (for students under 16) and students (aged 16 or above) to complete an updated consent form. I am sorry for this inconvenience, and thank you for completing this as soon as possible, and definitely by 9am on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The link for everyone (both parents and students) is here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wwKbEeKstEKPNgL1svSOdDuyvuXW7R5Co7hjpMtF9ORUM0RSUDVDVlpTODhSRUM4UFFOTTU4SzRPMi4u>

All information on the testing process can be found here:

<https://www.gordanoschool.org.uk/page/?title=COVID+19+Docs+%26amp%3B+FAQ&pid=69>.

Please complete the form in all cases, i.e. whether you are giving consent or not, so we know if you are declining to give consent. Can I please urge you to give consent - this will help hugely to protect everyone in our community and reduce the chance of students having to miss any more schooling or staff being off school and being unable to teach.

#### **INSET day - Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

A reminder that this coming Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, is an INSET Day (moved from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March). There will be no remote learning and no keyworker / vulnerable student provision on this day.

#### **Keyworker provision for the week of 8<sup>th</sup> March**

We will continue to provide in-school supervision for children of keyworkers (and other students where greater support is needed) in the week of 8<sup>th</sup> March until their year group returns to school, but this should be requested only when it is absolutely essential. We will be under significant pressure to ensure both a smooth return to school **and** run a significant 'mass testing' operation. As such, we ask parents/carers to consider whether key worker places are absolutely needed, given that students will be returning to classrooms in the subsequent few days.

Where students do attend the in-school supervision in that week, they will be required to wear school uniform (as will other students returning to school from the start of that week).

Charlotte Thomas (Assistant Headteacher) will be sending further information on key worker provision early this week and asking for a quick return to enable planning.

#### **Government guidance on face coverings in classrooms**

You will have seen that there is significant debate following the release of government guidance that, as a short term measure until Easter, all students and

staff in classrooms should wear face coverings where social distancing cannot be maintained (unless students have a medical exemption).

This is a complex issue, with the scientific evidence, the educational impact and the personal impact for students and staff all adding to arguments on either side. We will be considering this carefully in the next few days in liaison with our Governors and the other Secondary schools in the LSP.

We must be realistic that any position we take will have strong reasons but also flaws - there is no single 'right answer' here. In the end, we have to make a decision that we feel, on balance, best supports the safety of students and staff and enables the best educational and social experience on return to school. We might think of it as one of those situations where our responsibilities towards others are more important than our individual rights. Parents and students have demonstrated this wonderfully so many times over the last year through support of the school, and I will be asking for your support for our position on this issue (once finalised) by acting in solidarity with us on this short-term measure. This will allow us to concentrate on what matters most - supporting the return of students to school.

### **OFQUAL decisions on awarding grades, Summer 2021 (especially for Year 11 and 13)**

The outcomes of the OFQUAL consultation regarding the awarding of summer grades were published on Thursday. We are currently trawling through the detail of this and will be communicating with further detail tomorrow evening, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March. The summary statement from the DfE is here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=2568affc-1ccd-40cf-af75-2e775650b1a2&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=2568affc-1ccd-40cf-af75-2e775650b1a2&utm_content=immediately)

Students and parents should be reassured that this closely 'fits' our previous understanding of how the process would unfold, and gives flexibility to schools in managing the process in the way that best works for them and their students. As such, our process for the assessment and awarding of grades will be able to give all students the opportunity to perform at their best, with good time to enable them prepare them for any 'counting' assessments and for us to fully support them in doing so.

### **World Book Day - Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March**

As we will not be in school for World Book Day, we will be unable to distribute the usual £1 World Book Day tokens. Instead, the token is available to download here:

[https://www.worldbookday.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/booktoken\\_SecondaryUK.pdf](https://www.worldbookday.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/booktoken_SecondaryUK.pdf)

You can print the token or download it onto your phone - though some retailers, such as Sainsbury's and Asda, will only accept printed vouchers. The book token can ONLY be used in participating bookshops (find your nearest at [booksellers.org.uk/wbd](http://booksellers.org.uk/wbd)) and supermarkets.

Children and families can use their £1 Book Token until Sunday 28th March, though participating stores will honour tokens in exchange of the £1 books beyond the 28 March, whilst stocks last. Each retailer will decide whether they are able to offer £1 off other children's titles. The digital £1 book token is intended for single use only. Tokens cannot be redeemed online.

There are two competitions for students - "Create a Potato Book Character" and "Guess the Staff Shelfie" (I gather Mr Pugh's is pretty easy to spot!).

Information about the World Book Day books and the competitions Gordano School Library is running for World Book Day is available on Firefly:

<https://gordano.fireflycloud.net/school-library/world-book-day-2021> .

### **Community Alert**

Please be aware that we have had reports from our Primary School colleagues of an adult male, possibly two adult males, in a black car approaching children asking them to get into their car. We cannot confirm this information, nor can we be exact on details.

Police have been informed and we advise that you remind the children of keeping themselves safe and to be alert and assertive should they be approached by a stranger.

Further advice can be found here:

<https://www.safety4kids.com.au/safety-zone/stranger-danger>  
<http://www.personalsafetyadvice.co.uk/what-stranger-danger.html>

### **Sixth Form Raising and Giving (RAG) Week**

Traditionally Gordano Sixth Form run an annual week of charity fundraising on site - this year we are fund raising virtually and hope that this offers an opportunity to extend our activity offer into the wider community. We aim to use our talents and engagement to raise money for our twinned communities in Kenya through our linked charity, 'Mend the Gap'.

Since 2012 Gordano School has worked with Mend the Gap to support schools, orphanages and village communities in West Kenya, visiting Kissi and the Masai Mara each year to work alongside Kenyan students, teachers, families and the Mend the Gap team. Like so many great causes, the charity's income has dropped by two thirds over the last year and funds are desperately needed to continue our activities in the under-resourced village self-help groups, orphanages and schools that wholly depend on the charity.

The team have assembled a range of online events and fundraising initiatives, and also invite donations to a great cause that has become very much part of the Gordano fabric and which demonstrates our values of global citizenship. We would love to see any Gordano alumni - and their parents - who have been involved with the charity over the years, join with us for these events.

Please find the full programme and the link to the just giving page at:

<https://www.gordanoschool.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=172&type=pdf>

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jeanne-fairs2>

**And finally...**

Thank you for persevering through a long update. As previously stated, we will follow up with some further detail in a video on the next few days. We will then seek to share all the information that students and parents need about the return to school by the end of this week, so that everyone is really clear and we can all support a really smooth return to school.

Please bear with us as we work through this mammoth task in our endeavour to get all students back to school. It is going to be a very busy few weeks, but it couldn't be for a more uplifting goal - the (hopefully irreversible) return of students to school.

As the emerging warmth of the Spring sunshine currently beams through the window, I am reminded of my favourite line from my favourite film - *"hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things"*. Bonus points to those that know the film - I'll reveal in my next communication!

Wishing you all the best on this sunny weekend, and we can't wait to see the school fill again with the buzz of our students.

Wish best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Inman', followed by a horizontal line.

Tom Inman  
Headteacher