



6th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: January National Lockdown update

In this letter:

- Remote learning – early indications
- Update on Summer Exams for Year 11 and 13, including Year 11 mock exams
- Free School Meals
- UCAS Applications (Year 13)
- Request for in school provision, week commencing 11th January
- Consent for asymptomatic Covid testing for students in school
- UCAS Application Deadline

Remote learning – early indications

We have received lots of positive feedback regarding remote learning over the last few days, and it was wonderful to see that over 98% of students engaged on Teams on the first day of remote learning on Monday.

Of course there have been a few teething issues, both for students and staff, but we're learning fast and it's been great to see both staff and students get to grips with the technology so fast.

Update on Summer Exams for Year 11 and 13, including Year 11 mock exams

Following Monday's announcement that GCSE and A Level exams would not continue 'as planned', the Secretary of State has this afternoon indicated his intention to use a form of 'teacher-assessed grades' to award qualifications this summer. Ofqual will now draw up more detailed proposals, but this is likely to take a number of weeks so we will need to have patience.

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It remains most likely that the generation of these 'teacher-assessed grades' will include the use of further 'exam-like' assessments, whether set and assessed internally or externally, over coming months. As such, the message to students should be to continue to work just as they have been doing, and to expect that their grades will be significantly determined by future assessments, so the work that they are currently doing is as important as ever.

We will be working to ensure that no students are disadvantaged as a result of the closure of schools (past, current or future) and that any particular circumstances (such as Exams Access Arrangements) are fully accounted for.

Vocational exams in January are able to continue. Given the small numbers involved in these, we are very confident of students being able to sit these safely and will therefore continue to run these exams to give students the opportunity to gain the credit that they deserve for their hard work.

We are planning that Year 11 mock exams will continue remotely next week, and we will be writing separately to Year 11 parents this evening to share more information about how this will work.

Free School Meals

Schools will receive funding to continue to provide Free School Meals during school closures, and we will be in contact with families who receive these in the coming few days regarding ongoing arrangements from next week, which are currently being finalised.

UCAS Applications (Year 13)

It has today been announced that the deadline for UCAS (University) applications has been extended to 18:00 on Friday 29th January 2021. Any Year 13 students still looking to submit an application should make contact with the Sixth Form Team immediately.

Request for in school provision, week commencing 11th January

We continue to provide in school provision for the children of critical workers and those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study).

The government definition of a critical worker includes *"Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the following sections"*.

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Further details can be found by following this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Whilst we recognise provision is open to students where one parent only is a critical worker, we would ask that you only request this provision where it is necessary. Our remote learning provision means that teaching staff are delivering a full timetable of lessons, so there is a considerable strain on staffing of the onsite groups, made even more prevalent due to the limited numbers of students that can be accommodated in one room in order to mitigate risk. Therefore, if one parent / carer is a non-critical worker working from home, we would ask that, where possible, you consider keeping your child / children at home to access our remote learning offer.

If you require provision for week commencing 11th January 2021, please complete the online survey by 9am on Friday 8th January 2021. Unfortunately, although we will endeavour to do so, we are unable to guarantee that we will be able to accommodate any responses received after this time, as we will have to plan our staffing needs during Friday morning:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wwKbEeKstEKPNg1svSOdNSDFbjPPPhCjOot32Rc6o1URDFEQ1U2NEtQT1dMRDBFVzZLS0ZSU1ZRSi4u>

You will need to complete the form once for each child where you are requesting supervision. Please assume a place has been allocated if requested, as we will not be sending out confirmations. There is no need to complete the above survey if your child is coming into school as they are classed as 'vulnerable' – we are or will be in contact with you directly if we are able to offer in school provision under this category.

More information on the practicalities for in-school provision next week will be shared on Friday – we'd be grateful if you could wait until then rather than emailing in separately.

Covid testing for students in school and giving consent

In order to be ready to start the asymptomatic testing of students who are in school, and for others on their return, we are required to gain the consent of parents (for any students under age 16) and students (if 16 or older). In all cases we will confirm with parents whether consent has been received.

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Whilst, from a school perspective, we believe that this testing programme is the best way to protect our whole community and to reduce further impact on the education of students on their return, it is important to stress that the decision to consent to testing (on return to school, and daily for seven days in the case of being established as a close contact) is for parents and students. As it stands, students eligible to attend school under the above provision will still be able to do so if consent for testing is not given. Should these students be identified as a contact of a positive case they will be asked to self-isolate for ten days as per the self-isolation guidance.

More specific guidance relating to the process will all be available in the next 24 hours on our 'Covid' page on the school website, including Privacy Notice and Data Protection information:

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

For all students (whether in school at present or not at the moment), please complete the survey below to indicate whether or not you consent to them being tested. We would ask you to complete the form in all cases, i.e. whether you are giving consent or not.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wwKbEeKstEKPNg1svSOdDuyvuXW7R5Co7hjpMtF9ORUMU1VTzRGMIRGUFQ3QU5GWjc2Sk9XUzBSVi4u>

If at any time you would like to withdraw consent you are able to do so by emailing:

datateam@gordanoschool.org.uk

Apologies for the length of the letter, but we'd rather you had more information rather than less at this very uncertain time. We will continue to keep you up to date with developments as they happen, and as things settle I hope to revert to my usual once-weekly communications on a Friday (or maybe I'm being optimistic).

With ongoing thanks for your immense support at this time.

My best wishes to you and all of our students,

Tom Inman
Headteacher

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