



MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

HEIDI THURLAND BA (HONS 1ST CLASS) NPQH HEADTEACHER

25th February 2021

Dear families,

I wanted to write to you to outline some key updates at the start of the new term and to inform you of our plans for the return to school from the 8th of March.

Return to School – On the 22nd February the Government announced that all schools will return on the 8th of March. What has become clear since this announcement is that the initial phase of this return is to be focused on asymptomatic testing of students. There are two reasons for testing students, firstly to identify asymptomatic cases in the school population. Identification of these on the initial return will help to protect the school and wider community. The secondary reason for testing in school is so that we can guide students through the testing process so that students can test at home twice weekly. The Government has stated that schools will provide three tests that are 3 & 5 days apart for all students of secondary age. If we begin on the 8th March we have five days to achieve this, this is not workable. The DfE confirmed late yesterday afternoon that schools can begin testing next week if they wish to do so. All testing at schools is at the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body, families will need to give their consent to testing it is not compulsory.

As a Headteacher my priority is safety of students and staff and of course providing high quality education. Education is our core purpose. There is a fine balance to make therefore with the capacity I know we have in school, protection of the school community and the need to have children back in the classroom as quickly as possible – especially Yr11 students. I have consulted extensively with Public Health, the LA and also Headteachers across Cheshire East as we have tried to reach a common consensus on our approach as schools.

Having reviewed our on-site capacity which is affected by the availability of space to test at the school and availability of staff I believe that in order to test all students safely we will need to begin the process next week.

Therefore I am proposing the following phased approach which I believe achieves the aims of protection whilst also ensuring we get children back into the classroom safely as quickly as possible.

Appointment times will be sent via email to each year group.

	2 nd March	3 rd March	4 th March	5 th March
Test 1	Keyworker Students & Year 11	Staff & Year 7	Year 8 & Year 9	Year 10
Test 2				Year 11
Test 3	This will be arranged in school time. All Students will attend school fully from the 8th March. P1 will be an induction session with their tutors they will follow their normal timetable after this.			

Please note that all staff will be involved in testing on Wednesday 3rd March. Live lessons will be replaced with independent learning, scheduled on google classroom.

Once students have taken their test they must leave site and go home. We will inform students of test results via automated text/email. In the wk of the 2nd-5th March students do **not** need to attend school in uniform for their first test. There will be no school bus transport until the 8th March so *students will need to be able to attend their test using their own transport arrangements.*

Testing will take place in the school sportshall and will be accessed via the leisure centre car park. Staff will be on hand to guide students to the testing area. *Parents/carers are NOT allowed into the sportshall.* We also ask that parents/ carers do not congregate together at any time whilst waiting for their child to complete the testing process. If you bring your child to site in your car please remain in your car throughout the process. If a student is unable to take the test due to anxiety we will simply stop the process for them. Students must consider how they manage their route to school and must not congregate with other students as per current Government guidelines. Social distancing will be in place throughout the testing process. Students must wear a mask whilst on the testing site (unless they are medically exempt), they will remove it whilst taking their test.

*Please note this is asymptomatic testing – **if your child has symptoms they must not attend school or their test appointment** but should instead book a test at a testing centre and follow subsequent guidance.*

Mr Edwards has produced an induction video for testing on site here at MHS. Please watch this video before you come for the test, to help reassure you of our safety procedures and testing process in the sports hall. It can be found on our website under *School information, Testing Induction video.*

Does my child have to take the test? No, although every child is encouraged to test, it is not compulsory. The Government have altered the consent forms (please dispose of the paper copies you were sent previously) so this has been attached to this email. You must return the completed consent form to school via email to COVID@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk by Monday 1st March. Students **MUST NOT** bring paper copies to school.

School Transport – There will be no school bus until Monday 8th March, the full service will resume on this date. School transport rules of mask wearing and sitting in allocated seats must be adhered to.

Home Testing – We will be providing you with information on home testing shortly. This will include links to a video to show you how to take the test at home, how to report results and when/how tests will be distributed.

Returning to School in the 8th March:

All students will return to school as normal on the 8th of March. Staggered start times will continue with Year 7 arriving at 8.30am all other students should arrive at 8.40. It is essential that students arrive on time. Students should continue to use their designated entrances. Students should wear full school uniform as per our uniform policy.

How will school run from the 8th March? We will reopen in the same basis that we closed. Students will continue to work in their bubbles, social times will still be carefully managed in Year group areas. If students have a PE lesson they should still be attending their school PE kit. Please ensure your child arrives fully equipped for their lessons as we are unable to share equipment.

Masks in School – The revised guidance now states that there is an expectation that **masks are worn in classrooms as well as any other areas where social distancing is not feasible**. Students already wore masks in the canteen/queues for food and when moving around site. We will now expect that students wear masks during lessons. This is for a limited period of time, we understand this will be reviewed on the 29th March by PHE/the Government.

We ask that students where possible avoid using disposable masks due to the impact on the environment. Masks will need to be washed regularly and we suggest students have access to a spare mask. As always if your child has a sensory issue identified through EHCP or has a medical condition that means they are exempt then our SEND & Pastoral team will work with you to make exemption arrangements for this.

Once again I am relying on the support of all of you to ensure we keep our community safe. I fully appreciate wearing masks for long periods is not ideal, however we must do all we can to mitigate risk in order to keep all of us safe – in school and at home. I know many schools implemented this measure last term. I have always said I will only ask this of students if it is directly asked of us through PHE guidance and that is the situation we are now in. We all want a safe return to school this has to be one of the compromises and is certainly better than an extended period of remote learning.

Academy Conversion Consultation – Last half term we completed a consultation with stakeholders on the resolution of the Governing Body to join the Sir John Brunner Foundation. The consultation process did not raise any concerns or provide us with any reason to change our decision making. The application to be an Academy and to join the Sir John Brunner Foundation was submitted to the Headteacher board just before half term. I am delighted to inform you that this has been approved by the Headteacher Board on the 25th February. This has now given us the ‘green light’ for us to work with the LA to make the necessary land and legal transfers across into the foundation with a view that we will be part of this excellent multi-academy trust in September 2021. Our alliance with the Foundation will, in our view, only enhance the reputation of MHS and provide us with strong support to achieve excellence in learning for our community. This journey has taken over four years but we are now able to see the finish point and what will be the start of something new and exciting.

I am incredibly proud of our school community we have demonstrated once again our resilience and excellence in our work. We cannot wait to welcome all students back on the 8th of March.

Best wishes to you all,

We’ve got this.

Heidi Thurland



Headteacher Middlewich High School
Excellence in Learning – Achievement for All

Useful emails:

admin@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk - general enquires/ICT support/data support/ social media posts / recognition of student work

covidemergencies@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk – to report in a positive case of COVID in a household