

18<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear parents/carers,

**Re: School reopening January 2021**

As you may be aware, the DfE announced yesterday that secondary schools must delay full opening in the week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and instead only open to exam year groups (in our case Year 11) and children of key workers. There has also been an announcement about possible plans for in-school COVID-19 testing. The DfE has made it clear that these measures are to support Public Health and help to ensure that schools remain open during the pandemic.

As the DfE has recognised, the timing of the announcement and the fact we are still awaiting some further guidance, presents some significant logistical issues for schools to resolve in a short space of time. Part of the support the DfE have offered schools includes the option to take an additional INSET Day on 4<sup>th</sup> January. This is to enable schools time to plan quality blended provision and begin preparations for in-school testing. Having consulted with Excalibur Academies Trust and our Local Governing Board, we have decided to access this support and therefore John O'Gaunt will be **closed to students on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021**.

Learning for all students will therefore, resume on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021. As per DfE guidance, we will have a phased return. Years 7 to 10 will be at home and we will provide them with remote learning. Year 11 will attend school as normal. We will also be open for the children of Key Workers, and those considered 'vulnerable' using the following DfE criteria:

Vulnerable children and young people include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
- children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
- adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
- those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
- those living in temporary accommodation
- those who are young carers
- those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example, due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- other children and young people at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

If you feel that your child fits one of these criteria and wish to send them into school from the 5<sup>th</sup> January, **please contact the school by 3pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January** to register. Unfortunately, **we will not be able to accommodate children who do not register.**

Further communication will also follow this letter with detailed information about remote provision and other issues such as accessing free school meals, if your child qualifies. We will be providing catering facilities on site for Year 11 throughout the week. School Transport arrangements remain as they are and COVID routines in school are unchanged at this stage. Once we have received further guidance from the DfE around testing we will also communicate this to you.

My sincere apologies that we can't be clearer for now. We wanted to give you as much notice as possible about the INSET Day now. I hope that you will understand our reasons for taking the difficult decision about the 4<sup>th</sup> January and thank you in anticipation of your patience and understanding in this matter.

In the meantime, may I wish you and your family a restful Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hawthorne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'H'.

Mr R Hawthorne  
Head of School