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Dear Parent,

You will probably have seen or read the news stories this week about schools and colleges being asked to implement a phased start to the Lent term, and being invited to set up a mass Covid testing programme for pupils and staff. I am writing to you today to explain how Ellesmere College intends to respond to these extremely last-minute government requests.

We will follow the government guidance on how to phase the start of term, which is intended to ensure effective education can continue but also reduce the spread of the virus as pupils and staff return after Christmas. This means the following:

Phased start to term

When I wrote to you in the middle of November with regards to the start of the Lent term, we were mindful of having a cautious start back, with the first two weeks being a hybrid of online (TEAMS) and actual lessons in school. However, for some of you, we are now being told that you will need to stay at home and will no longer have the option of coming in for the first week of term. Full boarders who have already made travel arrangements and / or quarantine arrangements with us should proceed as normal and return to the College as planned.

From Saturday 2nd January 2021 College will be open for:

- Boarders having to self-isolate on their return, who have already informed us of their travel plans.

From Sunday 3 January 2021, the following pupils can come in to school:

- Boarders not required to self-isolate who are vulnerable children, children of critical workers and pupils in exam year groups (pupils in Years 11 and 13). However, you may still choose to stay at home and work on-line for up to the first two weeks of the new term.

On Monday 4 January 2021, the following pupils can come in to school:

- Day Pupils who are vulnerable children, children of critical workers and pupils in exam year groups (pupils in Years 11 and 13). However, you may still choose to stay at home and work on-line for up to the first two weeks of the new term.
- All pupils in Years 3 to 6. We do expect KS2 pupils to attend as normal, however if there are specific family reasons why a pupil is to stay at home please email your child's tutor to explain.

If you are unsure about whether or not your child falls into one of these categories, please contact us on Reception@ellesmere.com for confirmation.

During this first week of term, all other pupils should stay at home. We will be providing remote education for those pupils. As we know from previous lockdowns our provision of remote education works well.

From Sunday 10 January 2021, all pupils should come into school as normal.



Mass testing programme

We are positive about the potential for the mass testing of pupils (Years 7-13) and staff in schools, as a way of reducing the spread of the virus and enabling fewer pupils and staff to have to self-isolate. You can read more about how the government expects this programme to work [here](#). Participation will be voluntary and active consent will be required. We will write to you again with the appropriate forms nearer the time.

Setting up this programme in schools is an incredibly complex operation. We have been sent some information about how it should work already, but more detailed guidance is expected to be produced by the government over the Christmas holiday period.

We will not, therefore, be in position to have this programme up and running as soon as the Lent term starts. At the start of term, we will review what the expectations are, what support is available from the government or other agencies, and what we can realistically deliver.

We will let you know more about our plans as soon as we can in January. In the meantime, from the start of next term, we will continue to implement the safety measures we have been using in the Michaelmas term.

Please accept our apologies for having to send this letter after term has already ended. We are having to respond to a vast quantity of extremely last-minute and complex government guidance.

Thank you for your patience, and best wishes for a safe and enjoyable Christmas holiday.

Kind Regards,

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