

March 19th 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

My Irish grandad always said that Cheltenham Gold Cup day was the first day of Spring. On that basis, Spring starts today and we can look forward to a progressive return to brighter days and an ever greater sense of normality from this point on.

For the Academy, yesterday was a key day in that process. We completed our last day of **mass LFD testing** (a total of almost 2000 tests since Christmas, all of them negative) and students have now been issued with their first six kits (in two packs of three). There is no doubt that the PFD testing programme has been a major source of reassurance to many staff, students and parents and I would urge students to continue the twice weekly testing programme. The original recommendation was that testing should take place on Monday and Thursday mornings. However, experience has already shown that some people find it easier to fit the tests into their evening routine and tests conducted on Sunday and Wednesday evenings will be just as effective.

There are instruction packs in the testing kits and further step by step guides can be found [here](#). The results of all tests should be reported to the NHS following the instructions in the booklet. Please also use the simple check on the school gateway to confirm each time you take a test. This will help us judge when to re-order more tests from NHS test and Trace. If your child tests positive, please inform us immediately by texting 07725217199 so that we can initiate the contact tracing procedure if necessary.

The testing programme should continue throughout the Easter holidays. Students will be given additional testing kits before the end of term. Please continue to use the gateway to let us now how many tests you have used. Positive test results up to and including 7th April should be tested to the number above. For the remainder of the holidays, contact tracing will be the responsibility of NHS Test and Trace.

Our Health and Safety Committee met (virtually) on Tuesday evening this week and improved **one significant change to our safety measures**. From Monday 22nd March, students in Years 10-11 should enter the building via the dining room rather than lining up on the Yard. This will mean they are entering through a different blue gate and will, therefore, keep them separate from students in the other Year group bubbles if they arrive earlier than their **scheduled arrival time of 0855**. They will still be checked for symptoms before they enter the building. This change will also enable us to re-institute the "passport control" checks of uniform and equipment and so ensure students are ready to learn before they move on to lesson 1. Students in Years 7-9 will continue to arrive at 0835 and line up in forms on the South Yard.

In another small step back towards normality, the **tutoring programme** for selected students in Year 10 which was scheduled to begin in January will relaunch next week. Students will work with online tutors for two evenings a week after school. The families concerned have all the details and I am grateful to Mr Reed and Mrs Dooley for re-establishing this important part of our recovery curriculum.

It was very encouraging that so many parents took part in our **online pathways evening** on Wednesday evening. The pathways information can be found [here](#) and there is a step by step guide to the process of submitting your options [here](#). Please do not hesitate to contact your child's designated Pathways advisor if you have any questions about which courses would best suit your son or daughter. Please remember that the deadline for online submission of your preferred courses for your child is Tuesday 23rd March.

A key task for all secondary schools between now and June will be the process of **assessing and grading** those students who would have been due to take exams this summer. It is important to remember that, this year, the process is based on the levels students are achieving right now at the content they have covered in school. This contrasts with last year where teachers were asked to predict the grades the students would have got had teaching learning and assessment not been interrupted by the pandemic. This means that, before and after Easter, Year 11 students and Year 10 students in their pathway subjects will be taking a series of assessments which will be the key evidence for their grading. Subject teams have been working hard on planning the programme of assessments and we have developed what we think is a thoroughly robust system for ensuring that the grades awarded are robust, well-evidenced and fair. While teachers will share with students the marks for individual assessments, it is important that both students and parents understand that they will not be able to have conversations about overall grades ahead of the publication of results in August.

Step by step, it is starting to feel as though our focus is shifting back from managing the implications of the pandemic to focussing on teaching, learning and assessing our students. While we have all learnt to be very careful about predicting the future, as spring begins, it does start to feel that we can look forward with a good deal more confidence. One thing I will not be predicting, though, is the winner of the Gold Cup. My money will stay firmly in my pocket!



Richard Hedge

Headteacher

The Macclesfield Academy

PA: Lara Nolan

lara.nolan@macclesfieldacademy.org

Tel: 01625 383113