

17th December 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Tomorrow sees the end of the strangest school term I've ever experienced and I would like to start this letter by congratulating the whole of Team Hyde – pupils and staff – for their resilience, positivity and sheer hard work since we reopened in September. I am also hugely grateful to you for your support, understanding and patience this term as we have learned to do things differently. Our school has not just survived but thrived thanks to everyone playing their part and hopefully, when it's safe to do so, we will see all the wider enrichment and enhancement activities begin to reappear. In the meantime, it has just been a joy to have our pupils back with us again and engaging so well with their learning.

IMPORTANT - News just in regarding the start of term in January

We have been informed just this afternoon that after the two week Christmas break, *“Secondary schools and colleges will operate a **staggered return**, offering all non-exam year groups full-time **remote** education, as close as possible to that which students would get in class, during the first week of term, with face-to-face education for all starting on 11 January...Students in exam year groups (Year 11), vulnerable children and children of critical workers will all attend school or college in person from the start of term, as will all students in primary, special and alternative provision schools and colleges.”* This means **that only Year 11 will return to school on January 4th, all other year groups will return on January 11th**. Work will be set online

As was the case during the summer lockdown, we will remain open to vulnerable pupils and children of keyworkers in all year groups; we will issue further information about this tomorrow morning.

We are told that this staggered return is to enable schools to set up systems for on-site coronavirus testing which will enable us to remain safe as pupils return from Christmas and will minimise disruption during the spring term. I have yet to receive full details as to how this will work but will share them with parents and carers at the earliest opportunity. The following link will take you to this afternoon's announcement from the DfE:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/staggered-rollout-of-coronavirus-testing-for-secondary-schools-and-colleges>

I can only apologise for the short notice and the inconvenience that this will cause to families – I'm sure you share our frustrations with the release of this information just as we break up for the holiday. I will endeavour to keep you updated as and when I receive further information.

Covid alerts during the holidays

Public Health England require me to remain available to support Track and Trace up to 12pm on Christmas Eve; please follow the guidance below:

If your child begins to display symptoms of Covid-19 on Friday 18th, Saturday 19th or Sunday 20th December AND subsequently tests positive for Covid-19, you must notify school as soon as possible and no later than midday on Thursday 23rd December. We do NOT need to be notified of pupils who become symptomatic from Monday 21st onwards. To arrange a test please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

If your child is not displaying symptoms but tests positive for Covid-19 on Friday 18th, Saturday 19th or Sunday 20th December, you must notify school as soon as possible.

To notify school of a positive result, please go to our website and click on the link on the home page.

I am obliged to notify the parents of any children identified as contacts of a positive case and they will be directed to self-isolate for 10 days from last contact.

If your child becomes symptomatic later in the holiday or tests positive, please refer to Test and Trace for advice, keep them at home and contact school when we reopen in January.

Free school meals vouchers

We have now received voucher codes for students on free school meals to cover the Christmas holidays. Parents/carers who are eligible have been sent a voucher to their preferred e mail address. Please note that the vouchers are for Morrisons supermarket (and **not** Asda as previously advised); we have no control over this and I'm afraid we cannot change the designated store.

Online safety

With more time at home and many pupils with new devices over the holiday, we have recently shared an e-safety presentation with all our pupils. It's also worth remembering that any parental controls should be refreshed when a new device is brought into use. We have been made aware of concerns relating to the potential misuse of TikTok and other social media platforms and whilst the sites and services that your child likes to use may be changing regularly, the message about keeping themselves safe remains the same.

If your child wishes to download a new app or you have concerns about a current app they already use, then we would recommend considering some of the following points:

- Take an active interest in your child's online life and talk to them about how they use technology
- Discuss with your child how they keep themselves safe
- Ask them why they use or want the app
- Talk to them about online behaviour
- Apply appropriate controls
- Discuss your own expectations about the types of content and information they access and share

A short video relating to the dangers of pupils unknowingly disclosing personal information online can be found via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nBxKFnnZLc>

THC vape warning

Unfortunately, we have been made aware that since the start of the year there have been several reports of incidents in schools and amongst school age children in Bury, Rochdale and Oldham involving substances that were sold as either 'THC vape', 'THC vape pens', 'THC oil' or 'cannabis oil' but actually contain synthetic cannabinoids. The reports usually indicate the substance was vaped in an electronic-cigarette device and some of these incidents have led to pupils collapsing and to the emergency services being called. It is known to be extremely dangerous for a young person with no tolerance to inhale even a single dose of a potent version of these substances.

Sadly, we are told that these substances are becoming more widely available in our local area and would urge parents to be vigilant.

Contact details

If you have recently changed your mobile phone number, or if you do so during the holiday, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can keep our records up to date. Now more than ever we rely on being able to contact parents and carers in a timely manner. Many thanks!

The end of term tomorrow

Tomorrow is a non-uniform day for all pupils (no charge) and I can confirm that finish times are as follows:

12:00pm Year 7

12.05pm Years 8 and 9

12.10pm Years 10 and 11

2020 has been different to be sure and I hope that all of our pupils and staff and their families are able to safely spend some quality time together over the last two weeks of this unusual year. Whilst the start of vaccinations and increased access to testing are encouraging, it will clearly be some time before things return to normal and we will continue to keep our school as safe as possible in the new term. On behalf of the staff team, it only remains for me to wish all of our fabulous pupils a very enjoyable and well-deserved break.

We'll see you next year!

Very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ARadcliffe". The letters are cursive and somewhat slanted to the right.

Andrea Radcliffe
Headteacher