

Morning to you all,

Following my previous post on Wednesday 30th further guidance has been released by the government regarding a flexible approach for special schools for the 1st week of term due to the new variant of the COVID-19 virus.

This flexible approach allows parents of Secondary and college pupils to choose:

- if they want their young person to return to school on Tuesday 5th January
or
- to access home learning from Tuesday 5th January to Friday 8th January, and return to school on Monday 11th January. Currently the advice is that all pupils in special schools will return to school on Monday 11th January.

Therefore, if your young person attends the Secondary or college department at Durham Trinity and you would like them to access home learning from Tuesday 5th to Friday 8th January, please email the school via the school website Contact Us page, <http://www.durhamtrinity.durham.sch.uk/contact-us/> requesting a Leave of Absence. This will not affect your child's attendance figures.

Following receipt of your email a member staff from your young person's class will contact you on Monday 4th to confirm the Leave of Absence and discuss home learning. Parents will be expected to contact their transport operator.

If you would prefer your young person attends school from Tuesday 5th January; you **do not** have to contact the school. We will expect your young person to attend on Tuesday 5th.

Primary pupils:

If your child is not at secondary age but you are feeling very anxious about your child returning to school following the Christmas holidays due to them having an underlying health condition and the new variant; please contact your child's GP/Consultant for advice and contact the school via the Contact Us page on the school website <http://www.durhamtrinity.durham.sch.uk/contact-us/> and a member of staff will get back in touch with you to discuss your individual circumstances.

New Variant of COVID -19 virus:

You will have heard a lot of information about the new variant of COVID -19 on the news. Evidence is stating that there is a greater risk of secondary age pupils spreading the new variant. Therefore we are taking increased measures for these students from Tuesday 5th January. Previously we have provided the option for students to wear masks in corridors and communal areas due to their SEND however due to the new variant I am requesting that all pupils in the following class **must wear a mask in corridors:**

- Lambton
- Durham
- Hylton

If your young person is not in this class and you feel they are capable of taking their mask on and off during the school day without losing their mask, storing it safely and limited contact with their face,

they are welcome to wear a mask in corridors. Please write in your child's home-school diary that you are requesting this.

Again the media have suggested that masks should be worn in classrooms. This is not government guidance yet however if there is any further update from the government we will be reviewing our risk assessment.

Testing in Special Schools:

We are currently planning the logistics of testing at Durham Trinity. I have a meeting with the local authority and other special school Headteachers on Tuesday 5th January regarding mass testing. Durham County Council's Health and Safety Team will be supporting special school next week as a priority as we all recognise the additional challenges testing in special schools compared to mainstream secondary schools. Therefore I will be back in touch with further updates and information regarding these procedures.

This term will be once again very challenging for us all and I recognise the anxiety you must be feeling as parents, therefore I request that you share these anxieties with school staff by contacting the school website Contact Us page <http://www.durhamtrinity.durham.sch.uk/contact-us/> or your child's class email address.

Thank you again for your support and I will be back in touch very soon as this situation is rapidly changing.