



# Charles Darwin School

Operated by the Charles Darwin Academy Trust

**Headteacher: Sunil Chotai, BSc**

31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I trust that you are having a good festive season, albeit a vastly different one from the ones we have all become accustomed to.

I do not normally write to parents and carers during the Christmas break; however, this year is different on so many counts.

You will be aware of recent government announcements regarding plans for staggered reopening of schools in January and coronavirus testing for all pupils returning after the Christmas break. There was a lot of uncertainty regarding the detail behind government announcements. Today, I am glad to say, the Secretary of State has clarified matters a little and I am thus writing to update you about these announcements and our own plans going forward in relation to:

1. Planned staggered return to school
2. Mass testing using lateral flow devices
3. Keyworker and vulnerable children provision
4. Seeking Volunteers for the mass testing programme

## **Staggered return to school**

The government has stated that the return to school for pupils in January will be staged. Our expectations are that students in Years 11 and 13 will return to school from 11<sup>th</sup> January for mass coronavirus testing and once this is complete to normal schooling. Sixth Form students (Yr12 and 13) who are scheduled to take examinations in January 2021 – even before 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 official start are required to attend those examinations only, even if they have not been tested for coronavirus.

Years 7-10 and year 12 will return properly from 18<sup>th</sup> January for mass testing (although we will try to organise testing for year 12 before this date if possible) and then to normal schooling.

We are not clear how long mass testing will take to complete twice for each year group with a 3 to 5 days interval in-between tests. The information available to us about testing in schools lacks this detail. So, depending on how quickly we can complete the testing of individual year groups the date of commencement of normal schooling for each year group will vary. Looking at the numbers and capacity involved it is my estimation that it could take an additional two to three weeks to test everyone.

It our understanding that we need to complete the testing of each year group twice before normal schooling for that year group can commence.

During the period that children are at home from the 5<sup>th</sup> January (4<sup>th</sup> Jan is an Inset day) remote learning via Showmyhomework will be set wherever school staff capacity allows. Priority will be given to examination year groups. The delayed and staged return will, it is hoped, help reduce the transmission rate of the virus and provide time for school staff to organise the mass testing.

### **Mass testing**

You will be aware that the mass testing mentioned above is to support public health efforts during the return to school in January 2021, to help keep as many pupils and teachers as possible in school beyond the start of term, minimising the spread of the virus and disruption to education. Whilst participation in these mass testing arrangements is voluntary for schools it is our intention at Charles Darwin to participate. The arrangements will be challenging to organise and facilitate, and they may prove to be financially costly but the benefit of enabling students to remain in education and minimising disruption outweigh these disadvantages.

Consequently, from 11<sup>th</sup> January, as indicated above the school will offer:

- As many pupils and staff as possible, 2 lateral flow device tests (subject to test kit arrival), prioritising staff, the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils attending the keyworker provision and those in Years 11 and 13.
- Weekly school workforce testing - this will help identify those members of staff who are carrying the virus without displaying symptoms, reducing the risk of transmission.
- For students and pupils as well as the school workforce, to conduct daily testing for those identified as close contacts of workforce colleagues, students or pupils that have tested positive - this ensures that they do not need to isolate and are able to continue to benefit from high quality, face to face education
- For every group, testing is voluntary, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within schools and colleges.

### ***Please note that:***

*In line with routine infection control practice, close contacts who decide not to be tested daily will need to self-isolate in line with guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.*

***To progress with arrangements for this lateral flow testing we are required to obtain consent from all those eligible for the testing before we can commence. Attached with this letter is a consent document which must be submitted to us before we can conduct the tests.***

***I would be grateful if you could complete the form, one for each Child, and return to us via email by the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021.***

**Please use this email [lfctestconsent@cdarwin.com](mailto:lfctestconsent@cdarwin.com)**

**In preparation for this mass testing, it would be extremely helpful if parents /carers could discuss and go through with their children how to take a swab and what is involved in the testing. Watching the YouTube videos linked below together at home could be highly informative and helpful**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZhSPnnXyPo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WayjX6vCdk>

### **Keyworker and vulnerable children provision**

This will commence on 5<sup>th</sup> January (4<sup>th</sup> is an Inset day) and operate up to and including 15<sup>th</sup> January. A reminder that this provision is for keyworker children, children with EHCPs and those deemed vulnerable.

Parents/carers who believe that their child falls into any of these categories should complete the attached keyworker provision form and return to [Schoolclosure@cdarwin.com](mailto:Schoolclosure@cdarwin.com). Once it is established that the required criteria are met, we will then contact you by return email to confirm a place.

I must make it clear that students attending will only receive the same supervised online learning as all other students working remotely.

### **Mass testing Volunteers**

We will be looking to recruit to the following voluntary roles, for which we will provide training in the new year, on receipt of further guidance.

<b>Job Role</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Test Assistant</b>	Prepares test sample for analysis, conducts processing of LFT and interprets results. Provides results to the Results Recorder. Ensures cleaning of processing bays.
<b>Processor</b>	Responsible for ensuring students have registered and distributing test kits on arrival. Ensures orderly entry of students on the testing site
<b>Registration Assistant</b>	Collates results from Processors and uploads to digital solution
<b>Results Recorder</b>	Cleans the testing bays and ensures waste is correctly disposed of, including working with clinical waste provider to dispose of clinical waste

### **Cleaning**

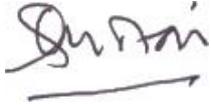
If you would like to register interest in one of these roles and to receive additional information when this becomes available, please complete the register of interest for coronavirus mass testing form attached with this letter.

### **Concluding remarks**

I would again like to thank you for your much valued ongoing support. I just want to take this opportunity to reassure parents and carers that we will endeavour to provide the best education

that we possibly can, be that face to face or virtually in the circumstances that are obviously challenging and worrying for our staff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunil Chotai', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Sunil Chotai  
Headteacher