



Everyone matters, every day counts

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1<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware, West Sussex has now been placed into a Tier 4 Covid-19 restriction level. In addition, the Secretary of State also made an announcement about the reopening of schools and mass testing on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December. Further guidance and details regarding this were released late on 31<sup>st</sup> December for special schools.

These events means that it has been necessary to revise our plans for the week commencing Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

I wanted to confirm as soon as possible to share our revised plans and I know that last minute changes are unhelpful, so please accept my apologies, but I'm sure you will understand why this is the case. I have also been able to speak with all other special school head teachers, to share our thinking and explore all possible options alongside the Clinical Lead for Special School Nurses, The DfE, WSCC and Sussex Public Health Team.

### Mass Testing in Special Schools

If you are willing to help run the testing regime in Oak Grove and have time to train and volunteer please email me at [head@oakgrovecollege.org.uk](mailto:head@oakgrovecollege.org.uk) The more college staff I have to use the less normality we will be able to offer.

As a school, we are required to offer the national mass testing programme. We believe this will help us to be as safe as possible and to remain open. There is a lot of new guidance for us to follow, to put this in to place and we need time to do this properly. It is most sensible to follow the guidance to offer staff testing before students return to college.

We have not yet received the testing kits, guidance or training on implementing the programme. I believe the tests will arrive on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January. Therefore the information in italics below is a guide, I will write and update you when I have further guidance.



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Oak Grove College is part of the Federation of Special Schools comprising Oak Grove College, Cornfield, Herons Dale and Palatine Schools

We aim to offer mass testing (2 swabs, taken 3 days apart) to all staff and students over the age of 11, who can administer the test themselves or with minimum levels of prompting and encouragement. We will also work with students who want to be tested, but cannot physically administer the test themselves, to agree a way forward. No student will be forced to be tested and testing will not take place without parental consent. If your child is over 16 and is competent to make their own decisions, we will work with them and you to agree consent together.

We need time to work with Special School Nursing Service to better understand the role they will play in the mass testing of pupils with SEND who are not able to test themselves. We believe that offering mass testing as a college is an additional way of helping us reduce the risk of the virus. However it does not replace or reduce the need for all the previous protocols around distancing, isolation, hand washing, mask wearing etc to be followed. They must still be followed.

We will write separately to you about consent for testing.

#### **Tier Four Restrictions**

As a school in a Tier Four area, any member of staff or pupil considered to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), must now stay at home and access remote education. You will receive a letter or text message from the government alerting you of this fact.

Secondary Age and Post 16 Pupils college remains open for all secondary pupils and staff, with a delayed and flexible start to the term.

There may be impacts with the external providers we use and we do not expect any to be able to provide face to face learning on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January.

We will also be reducing the number of external visitors to Oak Grove, in line with our own Covid-19 operational guidance, stopping all off site visits and reducing movements of some classes around the college.

The government has given flexibility to the reopening of secondary age pupils in special schools, to allow us to prepare for mass testing. We are committed to opening our school as safely and as soon as possible.

Oak Grove College will be open to the children of critical workers from 5th January. If you think this applies to you please email James Winchester, Deputy Headteacher on [jwinchester@oakgrovecollege.org.uk](mailto:jwinchester@oakgrovecollege.org.uk) to confirm your need for a place.

We will be in touch with these families on Monday 4th January to confirm that a place is available and with the transport teams.

Part of our aim is to keep the number of students in college as low for the week commencing 4th January, so we can test as many staff as possible and all students on their return (where consent has been granted).

Monday January	4	INSET DAY - Closed to all students Training, preparation and testing of staff begins.
Tuesday January	5	Critical worker students where childcare is necessary and Year 11 (Marvel)
Wednesday January	6	Those above and Year 10 (Marvel and Avatar), Year 7 (Avatar) and Animus
Thursday January	7	Those above and Koa
Friday 8 January		Those above and sixth form
From Monday January	11	Open to all students, except students who are clinically extremely vulnerable (to be reviewed when tier four changes) First day back of Year 8 and 9 (Marvel, Da Vinci and Avatar).

If you are eligible for Free School Meals we will be in contact with you.

### **Class Closures and Staffing**

We will continue to monitor our staffing levels and make decisions about which classes are open on a daily basis. It is important that we are able to contact families at all times easily. We expect staffing turbulence at the start of term as asymptomatic cases are identified.

We will be open to all pupils, where it is safe to do so and there is sufficient staffing to maintain pupil safety. Here are the principles we continue to follow:

- Try to maintain classes, with its own staffing team;
- Reviewing risk assessments of most vulnerable pupils, that we would want in school fulltime because of external risk factors;
- Consider part time opening of classes (one week on and one week off) where staffing drops below the required number;
- Close individual classes where staffing drops below required number;
- Review need for whole school closure in conjunction with PHE

Senior staff, including myself will be available from 1-2pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January if you wish to phone in and discuss any issue regarding this otherwise please feel free to email me at [head@oakgrovecollege.org.uk](mailto:head@oakgrovecollege.org.uk)

We very much look forward to seeing all students in the New Year.

Thank you for your ongoing support and cooperation in these changing times.

Wishing you a happy and healthy new year.

Yours sincerely

*Phillip*

Phillip Potter  
Headteacher