



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

1st March 2021

Information about the full re-opening of BFS from w/c 8th March

Dear parents / carers

I want to thank families for the incredible support you have provided, in difficult circumstances, over the past couple of months. We are very much looking forward to seeing BFS pupils again. We know returning to full face-to-face education is central to the wider life chances of our pupils and the sooner we can do this the better.

As always, at the forefront of our planning has been the commitment to prioritising the safety of all and ensuring as far as possible we get pupils back as quickly as we can with a smooth transition back to face-to-face teaching.

Below you will find important information about the full re-opening of BFS. Please ensure you read this information carefully and your child is fully informed about the changes which we have introduced. The government has provided a useful guide for parents about the re-opening of schools, this can be found here: [What parents need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#)

The system of controls and COVID-secure procedures put in place from September to December will resume so BFS will operate, look and feel once again how it was before Christmas. A reminder of these measures can be found in letters on our website [here](#).

I am also acutely aware that many families will be anxious about their children returning to school, but I want to assure you that our priority is keeping staff, pupils and families as safe as possible while making no excuses and continuing to work towards exceptional outcomes and great experiences for our pupils.

I hope this information will help to reassure you. We have also updated our website for quick reference to any documents, including the school risk assessment and useful information related to re-opening, including this letter. Please visit: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/full-school-opening/>

Phased return to BFS

As proposed in [my letter to families on 23rd February](#), we will be operating a phased return for pupils during the week commencing 8th March. This will enable an initial round of COVID testing

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for pupils prior to returning to school. This is in line with current government guidance and ensures we open as safely as possible by helping to reduce the spread of the virus and break transmission links by identifying those that may be carrying the virus unknowingly. I am strongly encouraging all pupils to be tested to help keep our school community as safe as possible before returning to face-to-face lessons. In order for your child to be tested in school you must have provided your consent via the consent form posted to families. Thank you to the large number of families who have already returned consent forms for their child.

Pupils for whom we have consent for will be invited to attend school for a test at designated time. We will undertake testing in year groups / tutor groups and it is vital pupils attend on time for their allocated test appointment. **Please note that pupils will undertake the test and then return home straight after, they will not remain in school after their initial test.** Following confirmation of a negative test result pupils will return the next day to resume their face-to-face learning.

Pupils not undergoing testing must attend school in line with the school's phased return arrangements. Pupils will start returning from Tuesday 9th March onwards as outlined below:

	Monday 8 th	Tuesday 9 th	Wednesday 10 th	Thursday 11 th	Friday 12 th
Phased return date (arrival time) (Year group return date)		Y10 (8:45) Y11 (8:55)	Y8 (8:25) Y9 (8:35)	Y7 (8:15)	
Year group testing days	Y11 Y10	Y8 Y9	Y7		
<u>N.B. Full details about arrangements including testing appointment times can be found at the end of this letter</u>					

A phased return will mean an overlap of face-to-face teaching for some year groups and remote learning for others. Teachers will continue to set remote learning for those not in school however this is likely to involve independent work rather than live sessions.

Attendance

It is vital that children and young people return to school for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. The government has confirmed that school attendance will again be mandatory. For parents and carers of children of compulsory school age, this means that the legal duty on you as a parent to send your child to school regularly will apply once more.

Self-isolation and shielding

A small number of children and young people may be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate. You should not send your child to school or college if they:

- have symptoms or live in a household with someone who has symptoms
- have recently tested positive themselves, even if they do not have symptoms
- live in a household with someone who has recently tested positive, even if that person does not have symptoms
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- are required to self-isolate for travel-related reasons

If any of the following apply to your child or family please report this via our COVID email address (covid@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk) and we will be able to provide further advice.

We know from growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable, are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list as appropriate, following review with a clinician. **If your child is confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable, they are advised not to attend school or college until further notice and please contact your child's pastoral leader for further guidance.** More information can be found here: [Shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from coronavirus \(COVID-19\).](#)

Uniform & equipment:

The expectation is that all pupils will wear uniform as normal. We are very proud of our pupils' appearance; it is one of the key features of the school and one of the things which makes our pupils distinct from other schools. Please ensure your child has all of the correct uniform ready for their return. Many of our pupils will have grown over the last couple of months and will need new items of uniform. I have confirmed that our school supplier, Josens, is taking orders via their website and is operating via a postal delivery service.

We will be having a renewed focus on uniform standards so please ensure your child is properly and fully equipped. As always, we will reinforce uniform and equipment expectations daily, issuing corrections if pupils are not fully equipped.

Pupils should bring with them their basic equipment (including fully stocked pencil case, pens, ruler, pencil, calculator, geometry set) and **a pack of tissues at all times, kept in their blazer pocket.** Pupils must bring booklets or other resources as directed by their teachers. Pupils must bring a drink (WATER ONLY) with them in a large, clear bottle. Pupils will only be allowed to use the outdoor water fountains. The full uniform and equipment list can be found here: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/school-uniform-equipment/>

Face coverings:

In addition to our existing arrangements the government is strengthening protective measures and in line with updated guidance, pupils will now be expected to wear face coverings in classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained. The government are describing this as a temporary measure and will review the situation again at Easter. We will continue to follow the latest guidance and will do so if and when it is lifted. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons. We will treat instructions on face coverings in the same way we do other uniform rules.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. Further guidance about face coverings and exceptions can be found here: [Face Coverings](#). If you believe this is relevant to your child please contact Mrs Foley via email (efoley@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk) and we will

discuss this with you (those who have applied previously for exemption do not need to respond again).

Pupils must be reminded not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it and they must dispose of temporary face coverings in the waste bins (not recycling bins) provided or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands or use hand sanitiser again after removing a face covering.

This video demonstrates how pupils can safely apply a facemask:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMSqc9SpbJc>

How will staff manage behaviour?

As you would expect, BFS will always hold the highest expectations of our pupils. As safety is paramount, we are expecting full cooperation from pupils at all times. Failure to comply places others at risk and will have serious consequences, dependent on the seriousness of the breach, up to and including in extreme cases permanent exclusion. We will spend time reminding the pupils of rules, routines and behaviour policies so they are really clear about expected conduct.

We expect pupils to strictly adhere to social distancing outside of school, especially on their journey to and from school. The school will not hesitate to sanction pupils for their conduct outside of school.

Other information:

It is vital that we have your up to date contact details. We are regularly sending out text messages to families about pupils completing the online register and we have recently posted reports home. If you have not been receiving these or you have recently changed your contact details or address please can you email these to info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk so we can update our system accordingly.

Further questions:

We are aware this is a great deal of information to read. If you have urgent questions, you can email info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk or contact the relevant pastoral leader.

We are really looking forward to welcoming pupils back to BFS.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Blake
Principal

Arrangements for pupil testing prior to returning to face-to-face education:

Key information:

- You must have provided consent for your child to be tested by returning the consent form previously provided
- Pupils must not eat or drink for 30mins prior to undertaking the test
- If your child has previously tested positive for COVID within the last 90 days we will be unable to test them
- We will **undertake testing in year groups / tutor groups** and it is vital pupils attend on time for their allocated test appointment to safely manage the number of pupils passing through the test site at any one time. (Please speak to your child and confirm which tutor group they are in). Pupils do not need to be in school uniform but must wear a mask whilst on site
- **Please note that pupils will undertake the first test and then return home straight after, they will not remain in school after their initial test.**
- Following confirmation of a negative test result pupils will return the next day to resume their face-to-face learning.
- In total pupils will undertake three tests. Subsequent tests will be conducted throughout the first two weeks (3 to 5 days part). Pupils will then be provided with home testing kits instead

The testing programme at BFS is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (including a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

- For further information please refer to this letter: [Testing Consent Letter](#)

Pupils test appointment times:

Monday 8th March	
TESTING APPOINTMENT TIMES ONLY	
AM: Year 11	
Tutor group	Arrival time
11MB	9.00
11CW	9.45
11JB	10.30
11JH	11.15
PM: Year 10	
10JH	13.15
10CW	14.00
10MB	14.45
10JB	15.30

Tuesday 9th March	
TESTING APPOINTMENT TIMES ONLY	
AM: Year 9	
Tutor group	Arrival time
9JB	9.00
9CW	9.45
9MB	10.30
9JH	11.15
PM: Year 8	
8JB	13.00
8CW	13.50

8MB	14.30
8JH	15.20

Wednesday 10th March	
TESTING APPOINTMENT TIMES ONLY	
AM: Year 7	
Tutor group	Arrival time
7JB	9.00
7CW	9.45
7MB	10.30
7JH	11.15

Arrival:

Pupils **MUST** arrive at school at their designated testing appointment time (see table above). They do not need to wear school uniform but must wear a mask (unless exempt) whilst in school. They should enter the building via the gate nearest the library and will be registered by their pastoral leader. They will sanitise their hands upon arrival and then be directed up to the sports hall.

Testing:

Once pupils are registered the lateral flow tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose and throat. The testing regime at BFS is now well established as we have been running this for staff and pupils currently attending school since the beginning of January. Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff in the school hall. Please note that as part of the testing process pupils will be required to swab themselves but guidance will be provided by staff.

Departure:

Once pupils have completed their test they will be expected to leave the school site immediately and return directly home. **Pupils will not remain in school after their initial test.**

Please ensure you have made suitable arrangements with your child in regards to transport, pick up and/or collection and given them clear instructions to maintain social distancing at all times and not congregate in groups or on the way home.

You will be informed of the test result using the contact details provided as part of the consent process and will receive a text / email notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system.

Following confirmation of a negative test result pupils will return the next day to resume their face-to-face learning.