

Friday 18 December 2020.

Dear Parents and Carers,

It truly has been an exceptionally busy term and I am so thankful to all our students for the tenacity and resilience they have shown throughout this period. I am hopeful that, in years to come, we will look back at the current Covid-19 pandemic with a glint of nostalgia from a very comfortable distance. That day will surely come; but, we are certainly not there yet. Since our full return in September, I can say without reservation that we have experienced the most challenging period for schools since the pandemic arrived and the end of these challenges is not, yet, truly in sight. Nevertheless, we persist and remain as committed as ever to the children and community we serve. At all times, our aim has been to remain reassuringly calm and positive for our students and we are grateful to you for supporting us with this. My letter to you today contains important information about the changes to our start date next term, our procedures for reporting a positive test of Covid-19 and initial information about the Government's Covid-19 mass testing initiative, as well as an update on events from the last few weeks. I invite you to please read this information carefully.

Important information

Yesterday afternoon, the government announced and confirmed plans for a phased return to schools for all secondary students in England. This means that, unfortunately, we have had to make changes to our planned return date for students in the New Year. These new details are as follows:

- **Students in Year 11 and Year 13**, alongside children of critical workers and those who are classed as vulnerable, will return to the school as planned on **Tuesday 5th January 2020**. Information for parents and carers that are critical workers, along with guidance on identifying if you qualify as a critical worker, will be shared with you shortly.
- **Students in Year 7, Year 8, Year 9, Year 10 and Year 12** will need to access their lessons remotely from Tuesday 5th January 2021 to Friday 8th January 2021. All students will be able to access the work and materials required via 'Google Classroom'. Students are familiar with accessing this platform, however, in the unlikely event that they are not able to access the information, tutors and staff will be able to provide them with clear instructions and guidance. Provision will be in place for all students that do not have access to appropriate I.T at home. If you require additional support or information about this, please contact Mr Paul Parker at the following email address: pparker@nsg.northants.sch.uk

All students will now return to school for face-to-face teaching on Monday 11th January 2021.



We understand that this change may pose childcare challenges for some of our families; I can assure you that we have shared this information with you as soon as we were notified of the national change. More information about the proposals for returning to school can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021>

On Tuesday 15th December, the Government also announced details of a new mass testing programme for schools. The aim of this is to enable every secondary school in England to have access to rapid Covid-19 testing from January. As part of this programme, students will be eligible for daily testing for seven days if they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive. Under current guidelines, the identified 'bubble' or close contacts have to self-isolate if one student or staff member tests positive. From January, those in the same bubble do not need to self-isolate if they agree to be tested once a day. Once fuller guidance has been released by the Government, I will share the details of this with you. I am hopeful that the rapid testing of staff and students will not only help to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 but also significantly reduce the disruption caused to schools. In January, we will be writing to you again with further details about our procedures for the testing. I am mindful that this is a huge undertaking for all schools, particularly a school of our size; as always, we will do everything we can to support this initiative. Schools have not yet received the training for this testing and we are still awaiting responses to many questions about it; I thank you in advance for your patience and will share more information with you in the New Year.

The school's reception will be closed from Friday 18th December 2020 until Tuesday 5th January 2021 and, therefore, to enable us to continue to effectively support the national 'Track and Trace' process, we have modified our procedures for reporting confirmed cases of Covid-19 to us. Schools are required to continue with this process until Wednesday 23rd December 2020. We will resume our 'Track and Trace' procedures again upon our return in January. As of today, to notify us of a confirmed case of Covid-19 over this period, you will need to complete and submit an electronic form. This form is available on our school website and will be administered by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The electronic form can be found in the 'Parent' section of our website on the 'Covid-19' page. This can be accessed through the following link: [Northampton School for Girls - Covid-19 \(nsg.northants.sch.uk\)](https://nsg.northants.sch.uk) As well as basic information about your child, you will be required to provide the following information, which will allow us to identify any students or staff that would be considered close contacts of the individual that has tested positive for Covid-19:

- The date that your child first started to show symptoms of Covid-19.
- The date that the positive test was taken.
- The last date that your child was in school.

I thank you in advance for your support in ensuring that this information is shared with us as soon as possible if your child has received a positive test for Covid-19. This will help us to respond swiftly and to contact other students or staff that may have been in close contact with your child.



It is said that crisis often drives innovation and we will be looking to continue with many of the virtual events and changes that we have implemented this year at NSG. On Thursday 26th November we held our first virtual Parents' Evening event: staff received full step-by-step training, additional video tutorials were made available and information was shared with parents. Parental and staff feedback has been very positive and, ahead of future virtual Parents' Evenings, we will be making further improvements based on the all the feedback we have gathered.

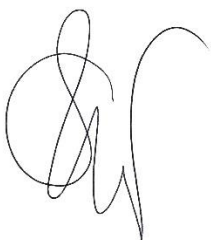
Despite these challenging times, our school community has come together, as always, to help others in our locality. Our Food Bank charity event, held on Monday 14th December, was a tremendous success and we were overwhelmed by the donations that we received – I am immensely proud of our students and thank you all for your incredible generosity. The food donations have been transported to the local Food Bank over the course of this week and they were very gratefully received. I would also like to say a special thanks to our Sixth Form Student Leadership Team who supported the organisation and promotion of the event so diligently.

Similarly, I am pleased to say that Covid-19 has not scuppered all our traditions and the fantastic Performing Arts department have been busy producing a virtual Christmas concert. Preparations for this included rehearsing from the theatre seats, socially distanced, and sitting in year group bubble bands. During each of the lockdowns, 'NSG Academy' also finished writing their new musical, 'Back to the Past', and auditioned and cast it using Flip Grid. They are now diligently delivering weekly rehearsals via 'Zoom', which demonstrates impressive dedication! We look forward to sharing this with you in the new year.

I think we would all agree that 2020 has been a lesson in expecting the unexpected. Indeed, it has become somewhat of a cliché that we have all faced 'unprecedented' levels of uncertainty. Given everything that we are experiencing in our school at the moment, we have had to adjust our pace with some of the activities and changes that we had intended to implement this year, yet we hope that you have already seen some of these emerging through our newly designed website and our increased communication with you.

On behalf of the all staff and governors of the school, I want to wish you a safe and happy festive break and look forward to welcoming our students back safely in the New Year.

With every good wish to you and your families,



Cristina Taboada-Naya | Headteacher
Northampton School for Girls

