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Saturday 2 January 2021

Dear parents and carers

Happy New Year to you all!

It seems that we have begun this year with a confused picture of school re-opening times and expectations. In the past few days, my leadership team and I have been meeting and planning for a phased return to school from next week, to enable us to begin the mass testing of students as directed by the government. We have spent a lot of time preparing the necessary paperwork, arranging the logistics of testing 600 people and staff have been planning for high quality remote learning. The next step was to write to you all with a clear and coherent plan...*however*, as John Lennon said, "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans"...!

The situation is changing on a daily basis and today the major teaching unions have initiated legal proceedings against the Department for Education to try to gain some clarity and assurances about a safe return to school, for both students and staff, and to establish the legal basis on which testing should be carried out. Until we have more information, we do not feel able to proceed as we originally intended. Some of you have contacted me via the admin email to ask about returning to school and also key worker children. **At the present time** this is what we intend will happen:

- From **Wednesday 6th January** work will be provided remotely for ALL STUDENTS via Google Classroom. At this early stage please do not worry if your child cannot work on a laptop or computer – paper is fine. Tasks / explanatory videos can be watched on a phone. **No students will be in school from 6-8th January.** This includes key worker children.
- The only exception next week will be Child Development students who are taking their BTec external exam on Thursday 7th January.
BTec Construction and BTec Animal Care students who have exams on Monday 11th January will receive online revision from staff on Friday 8th January. All the BTec students will be written to separately, to explain the arrangements in place for them. At the present time the exam board is still planning to hold the January BTec exams; if we receive other information, we will let you know.
- **From January 11th we will be providing a combination of online lessons and tasks for all students – most likely KS3 although we may still have KS4 students at home at this stage. Further information about timetables etc will follow. Please check Google Classroom regularly.**
- **From Monday 11th January** we will make provision in school for key worker children in Years 7 & 8 ONLY. We would like to keep the number of children in school to an absolute minimum and will limit numbers each day; please do not ask for a place for your child if they can stay at home and work with older siblings etc. We cannot accept any child unless you have asked for a place in advance. Please note that children in school will be socially distanced in Year group bubbles and will be working

through the work set by their teachers via Google Classroom under supervision (not taught). This provision will be dependent on any changes to government guidance.

- **From January 11th** we *may* be able to have KS4 students back in school, but we await government guidance on this, and will write again confirming arrangements.
- **From January 18th** we *may* be able to have all students back in school, but again this will depend on the national picture and government guidance.

We will do our best to provide access to laptops and internet if children are likely to be at home for very long without them; at the moment we simply don't know how long this situation could continue.

I am sorry we are unable to offer more certainty at the moment. We don't get any advance warning of government intentions; like you we read it in the media! Please be assured that our priority will always be to try to provide the best education we can for our students and to give them the most positive school experience we can in these strange times.

I will write again next week if we have further information, or there are more changes! In the meantime, please contact me via the admin email if you have any concerns.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Gaston." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sue Gaston