



Monday 8 March

Re-opening of HGSS

FAQs

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Introduction

In line with Government guidance, we are keen to welcome back all our students for their normal timetabled lessons from Monday 8 March.

In order to make this return as safe as possible we have reviewed our risk assessment (this can be found on the school website) and have added the following measures to it:

Masks to be worn on-site at all times, except when eating/drinking, where a student/staff member is exempted, or when participating in PE outside as part of the curriculum

Ensuring all students have three lateral flow tests to identify any asymptomatic carriers.

We are keen to do our part so that we do not have to return to rota attendance by year group as a result of individuals coming into contact with asymptomatic carriers. During December 2020, we had a number of asymptomatic students from which Covid19 was passed on. Tracking and tracing close contacts meant that we had to ask a large number of students to self-isolate.

We are now in a different position as clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have been vaccinated as well as priority groups. In addition we also have the lateral flow tests, that we feel have made a real difference whilst we have been running our critical worker provision.

The information below has been provided to answer questions we feel students and parents may have about this return to school. This document will be updated as we move through the coming weeks as advice changes as do conditions.

We hope that you find the information below helpful. If you need any further support or information, please contact us on: office@hgss.co.uk

1. Why does each student need to have three lateral flow tests?

We have been running our lateral flow testing centre since January 2021 and have completed over 1000 tests. We therefore have built up some competence in carrying out these tests. The purpose of testing each student three times is so that they can be over-seen doing the swabbing part of the test and become proficient and competent at it. They are able to ask our staff questions should these arise. As a result, this should have an impact on their confidence when doing lateral flow tests at home with the home test kits and radically reduce the number of void results.

2. What is the difference between a lateral flow test and PCR test?

Lateral flow tests are used to identify the Covid19 in an active infection. The result is received within 30 minutes, unlike the 24 hours with a PCR test, therefore reducing the window of time for others to become infected.

PCR tests detect viral infection, are far more sensitive (they are therefore the "gold standard"), but as a result can also identify people as positive some time after an infection. These tests take longer to process.

3. Lateral Flow Tests only have 58% reliability, so what is the point, particularly if my child has to self-isolate as a result of a false positive?

Hospital and medical staff, who are the most at risk sector for Covid, have been carrying out twice weekly lateral flow tests for some time. Our feeling is that if it is good enough for trained Doctors etc. it is probably something we should also be doing.

The answer here is probably less about the individual and more about the added protection of the whole school community. Lateral flow testing sensitivity increases from 57.5% (home individuals) to 79.2% (with trained laboratory staff). We have been doing this for a bit of time now and by working with each student to complete three lateral flow tests we can improve the sensitivity of their testing when using their home kits. The asymptomatic cases we have picked up to date, have been confirmed as positive via PCR tests and have only resulted in the individual themselves being isolated rather than anyone else from the school community. In December 2020 we were having to isolate on average, 15+ close contacts per Covid case and in extreme cases a year group.

During December 2020 our experience showed that no matter how good a student was at wearing a mask, sanitizing their hands, etc it is human nature to become complacent, or to let our vigilance slip on occasion. Lateral flow testing partly works best when the majority of the school population complete it and in so doing more asymptomatic cases are picked up and removed earlier.

The more students that complete lateral flow tests, the fewer asymptomatic cases there will be on-site and the fewer close contacts there will be. By doing this we will minimise lost learning time for the majority and we are less likely to be in a similar position to the one we were in during December 2020. We are keen not to have to rota students in again. Not using everything at our disposal to make our site as free from Covid19 as possible, would be wrong.

We understand that a false positive result, would lead to the loss of learning time for that one student, but a PCR test can be taken after, and if that shows negative the student can return to site. Taking a lateral flow test is a selfless act and supports the school community.

4. My child had Covid19 two weeks ago. Should they have a lateral flow test?

No. If your child has tested positive for Covid19 as a result of a PCR test, they should not have a lateral flow test until 90 days after the positive test date. This is because they will have developed some level of immunity to Covid and there is a chance of them testing positive again.

5. What is a home-testing kit?

Once we have made sure each student can swab themselves properly, they will be issued a home testing kit. They will be asked to test themselves twice a week on a Sunday and Wednesday evening. The home test kit will give a positive, negative or void result within 30mins. If the test is positive, please self-isolate, let the school attendance office know and book a confirmatory PCR test. If the home test is negative, please do not inform the school. If the test is void, please re-do it.

6. What are the common reasons for a void result?

These are mainly due to the swabbing process. Students should have blown their nose well to remove as much mucus as possible. Students should wash their hands well. Students should look in a well lit mirror and rub each tonsil area. Touching the teeth or tongue with the swab can cause a void result. The swab is then placed in one nostril up as far as the hard bump you can feel on that side. The swab should then be rotated slowly for the required time. If it is not pushed up far enough, or only for a short time, this can also cause a void result.

7. If a student does not have a test, can they still come to school?

Yes, but we encourage all students to participate in this programme to add an additional layer of safety to all of us. By agreeing to take a test, we feel people are acting selflessly and also supporting the Holmer Green Senior School community.

8. If a student is at home self isolating, will they get live online lessons?

No. Work will be put on Satchel for students to complete, but this is unlikely to be live lessons as we would possibly be broadcasting images/sound of other students within that lesson.

9. Is it safe to come to school?

The guidance is clear that students returning at this point is safe, as long as risks are managed. In comparison to the return from the last lockdown, lateral flow testing is available and the vaccination programme has been rolled out, reducing levels of infection and giving vulnerable individuals a degree of protection. However, as with any activity that involves leaving your house, it is never possible to eliminate all risk. The guidance which the government has published to parents can be read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19#school-trips>

10. What are the expectations around attendance?

All students should attend school full-time from Monday 8 March, as attendance once again is mandatory. Students who have tested positive for Covid19 and have been asked to self-isolate should obviously not attend.

11. Will the canteen be open?

The canteen will reopen on Monday 8 March with food being available from both the canteen and the festival van. Anyone who is free school meal will be able to purchase their free school meal in the usual way.

12. My child has a free school meal, what will happen?

As of Monday 8 March, parents/carers will no longer receive the FSM funding and all students who are eligible for free school meals will be able to access them from the canteen.

13. What is happening with buses and taxis?

All students who use the county taxi service scheme will be able to travel to and from school using the same taxi service, but will obviously need to wear a mask.

All students who use the local bus services, should check the bus timetables, but we have been assured that the reduced services will be increased again from Monday 8 March, by the bus companies.

General Topics

Social Distancing

Students are asked to socially distance wherever possible. In classrooms and corridors this will not always be possible, hence we are asking students and staff to wear face masks at all times, except when eating/drinking, or where they are exempted.

Handwashing & Respiratory Hygiene

The virus can spread via direct transmission (close contact with someone who coughs or sneezes) or indirect transmission (touching contaminated surfaces). If we maintain distancing, never share resources, regularly sanitize/wash hands on the way in and out of each room, it means we can prevent and control the spread of the virus within our school.

What facilities will be available to ensure my child can wash their hands regularly?

There are portable sanitising stations available at each entrance to the School which staff and students must use; we also have stations available in key areas of the building and outside each classroom in use. There are also hand washing facilities available in all toilets.

All staff will be promoting regular hand washing for 20 seconds with running water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the catch it, bin it, kill it approach. Visual posters are displayed around the building to remind students of these hygiene practices and every lesson will start with a reminder of key safety points. When they first return to school, each student will receive an extended induction about virus control.



Will my child be allowed to wear a face mask to school?

We follow DfE guidance surrounding the use of face masks and as we can not guarantee social distancing in all our classrooms and corridors we are asking

students and staff to wear face masks at all times on site, except where eating/drinking, or where they have an exemption.

Cleaning

How often will classrooms be cleaned?

Classrooms will be fully cleaned prior to opening every day, they will also be sanitised after sessions with bins being monitored and changed if used.

All doors and common touch points in communal spaces will be sanitised everyday with more common areas like reception, etc. where handles will be sanitised multiple times throughout the day. Doors will be wedged open where practical to avoid the need to touch door handles.

Toilets will be cleaned fully prior to opening, and will be monitored/sanitised hourly.

We have a rota for fogging rooms/corridors, etc. which sprays a fine layer of disinfectant over all surfaces.

Sharing resources & IT

Will students be required to share resources such as books, pens and rulers?

No. They must bring in their own equipment. There will be a very limited supply of equipment for a child that forgets something, but the child will then keep this piece of equipment.

Will students need to share laptops/PCs at school?

Students should bring in their own 1:1 devices. Where they do not have one of these, and the lesson requires one, they can borrow one of the school laptops. Wipes will be available in classrooms. The devices are not to be shared between students. Each class will have a seating plan and this must be strictly adhered to.

Will students and staff be able to print?

The printing system at HGSS requires staff/students to send their printing to a particular printer, so this will be possible.

Will students be able to purchase meals at school?

Our cashless catering system requires the use of your child's PIN number. If they have forgotten this their form tutor will have a list of them.

What is the policy on symptoms and testing?

Students with symptoms should not come to school. They should isolate and be referred for testing with the NHS test and trace programme. The school should also be informed as a matter of urgency. If they test negative they can return, but

if they are positive they and their family will need to isolate for 10 days, as directed.

Up-to-date NHS advice can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/what-to-do-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/staying-at-home-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/>

What happens if a member of staff tests positive?

Any student who had been taught by that teacher, and was a close contact, in the last week would be notified, along with any other staff member they may have come in contact with.

Can my child get tested?

Yes. If your child has symptoms, they will be eligible for a test. If they have no symptoms, it is not necessary. You can apply for a test via the NHS 111 coronavirus service, or we can help with this at school if you are having difficulty.