

# RIPLEY ST THOMAS

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

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18 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

This week brings us to the end of the strangest and most challenging of autumn terms. I have been so proud of our pupils and students and the way they have adapted to the many restrictions and changes we have been forced to make. I am also proud of our whole staff team who have shown great resilience and adaptability. Providing a shadow curriculum online and skilling up to deliver online lessons for those isolating at home, alongside the normal day-to-day teaching has been difficult, but they have risen to the challenge. They have put their own anxieties to one side to ensure school runs smoothly and education can continue. I hope you will join me in saying a huge thank you to them.

## **DFE announcements**

### **Staggered return to school in January**

You will no doubt have seen the government's latest announcement regarding a staggered return to school in the New Year. Following their directions, Monday 4 January will be an INSET day. On Tuesday 5 January we will welcome back Years 11 and 13, children of keyworkers (as defined in the link below) and vulnerable pupils. **All other years** will access their learning remotely until their return to school on Monday 11 January. Further information will be sent regarding remote learning access on Monday 4 January.

[Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

If your child falls into the vulnerable category, then we will be in touch with you separately on Monday 4 January to arrange for your child to attend school from Tuesday 5 January.

If both parents are critical workers and you therefore intend to send your child to school on Tuesday 5 January, then I would ask that you inform us of this by emailing: [keyworker@ripley.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:keyworker@ripley.lancs.sch.uk) by Sunday 3 January at the latest.

This announcement was communicated to schools only yesterday and therefore I can only apologise for the short notice in sharing these changes with you.

## **In- School COVID Testing**

You will have also heard the government announcement that mass testing in Secondary Schools will be rolled out from January. We have very limited information currently on how this will be delivered but as soon as we know more, we will let you know. One of the aims of mass testing is to identify positive cases in people who have no symptoms and therefore reduce the spread of the virus in schools and the number of people who need to isolate if they are identified as a close contact.

*Believe.....*

Principal Mrs C Walmsley  
Chair of Governors Mrs J Garnett

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## **Y12 and Y13 exams**

The above change to the school return dates means that there will need to be a change to the Y12 exam timetable in January. I attach the new timetable to this letter. Students in school today have been informed.

## **COVID track and trace during the holidays**

### **Symptoms up to 48 hours after school closes**

Schools have been asked to continue their track and trace activities into the Christmas holidays and up until 23 December. If your child receives a positive test and they were in school in the 48 hours prior to their symptoms starting, please notify us using the email address [positivetest@ripley.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:positivetest@ripley.lancs.sch.uk) and give us the following information:

- Your name
- Child's name and year group
- Your telephone number
- Date the symptoms started
- Date of the test

We will need to take action to identify the close contacts where someone had been in school in the 48 hours prior to their symptoms starting. If your son / daughter should need to isolate as a result of being a close contact, we will notify you via text message during the holiday period.

### **Symptoms up to 48 hours after school closes**

If your child begins to display symptoms after Monday 21 December and receives a positive test, school does not need to be informed. You should follow the usual NHS test and trace procedures to identify your close contacts.

If your child has a positive COVID test result later in the holidays and their self-isolation will affect their return to school, please contact us via the usual absence line to tell us when your child will be expected to return in January if they are well.

## **Free School Meals over Christmas**

We are pleased that the Government has realised the need to support families during the Christmas break. If your child qualifies for Free School Meals, you will receive a voucher from Edenred at the start of the holiday period. Please check your emails (including your junk / spam folder) for this.

## **End of Term activities**

Aside from COVID, school life has carried on this week. Please have a look at our website for a roundup of our end of term news and charity initiatives. There are lots of photos of our young people getting involved which is a joy to see at a time of so many restrictions. We are pleased to have been able to support local charities: Lancashire Mind, St John's Hospice and The Olive Branch.

<https://ripleysthomas.com/its-nearly-christmas/>

## **And finally...**

We very much missed being able to go to our local churches for our end of term Eucharist services, but I am very grateful to Michael, our chaplain, who has put together an online Christmas service with the help of our young people, Mrs Garnett our Chair of Governors, and Rev'd Newlands. You can watch the service here:

<https://ripleystthomas.com/ripley-virtual-christmas-service-2020/>

Now, more than ever, it is important to take the time to stop and to reflect on the love, hope, peace and joy which are central to the Christmas story and which we find in Christ. Whilst Christmas this year may well be rather different, I pray you will experience a Christmas filled with peace and joy in the simple pleasures in life and that we can all look forward to a hope-filled New Year.

God bless,

Mrs C Walmsley  
Principal