

Dear Student, Parent or Guardian

I hope that you and your family are well.

**I am writing this brief message to address the issue of the reopening of schools and colleges.**

Like me I am sure that you have been following the (mixed) messages in the media regarding this topic. Please let me reiterate that I have no information from the DFE (or government more widely) on this topic that I have not shared with you. It is always my intention to be as transparent as possible in my decisions and throughout the response to COVID-19 I have attempted to communicate with students, parents and staff as fully as possible. I aim to continue in this manner and will promptly share any information or guidance that I get from official sources.

I would also like to be clear that I am not personally advocating an early return to College being fully open. I have experienced the impact COVID-19 can have on individuals and families and fully understand the anxieties that many students, parents and staff will have about reopening schools and Colleges particularly (but not exclusively) where they, or family members they live with, have underlying health conditions which place them at greater risk.

Despite this reservation it is important that the College is prepared for the possibility that the Government announces the re-opening of schools and Colleges before the end of the academic year. Consequently I have been discussing with the Senior Leadership Team the range of measures we could take to reduce the risks presented by returning to College, primarily through steps to maintain distancing. I would also want the College to respond positively to those students or staff who have (or live with others who have) underlying health conditions. Should the Government reach this decision (or should it become apparent that they will) I will share the measures that we propose to put in place with you.

I have also written to the MP for Worcester, Robin Walker, to ask him to forward my concerns and suggestions to ensure reopening schools and Colleges is done in a safe and successful way, on behalf of the College, in the hope that these might be taken into account by Ministers when they are making their decision. Relevant extracts from the letter are included at the foot of this email.

Finally, I'd like to sign off by thanking parents and guardians for their continued support and encouraging students to keep working hard until the end of their course or in preparation for their end of year assessments.

Best wishes

Ed

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***Please can you communicate our views to the relevant government Ministers regarding the re-opening of schools and Colleges so we can do this safely and successfully in the not too distant future.***

*Together with the College's Senior Leadership Team I have been planning for the eventuality of reopening prior to the summer break. We noted the welcome extension of testing to include our colleagues and believe that this will provide them with some reassurance. Please can you take the following points into consideration when reaching your decision on when to reopen schools and colleges:*

- *The well-being of staff, students, parents and family members should remain a priority in any decision regarding the reopening of schools or Colleges.*
- *Please share the reasoning for the Government's decision with us. Staff, students and parents are likely to accept that there is a balance to be struck between the increased risks to their health from returning to school or College and the harm done to students' prospects by a prolonged lockdown. Their confidence in, and support for, the reopening of schools and colleges will reflect the extent they are informed of the reasoning for the decision and in particular the increased level of risk the government believes to be acceptable;*
- *We have identified a number of measures that we can take to reduce the contact between the different members of the College when we reopen. However, it is important that Ministers understand that given the limitations of physical and staff resources it will not be possible to ensure that all physical contact is avoided nor that we are able to maintain a 2-metre separation at all times. Please note also that many staff and in particular students use public transport to get to and from school or College.*

- *Please consider the issue of PPE, and in particular masks, for staff and students and if this is something that the government decides not to provide in order to mitigate any additional risk from reopening please explain why not;*
- *Despite the best efforts of staff at schools and colleges students faced with external assessments such as A levels, applied courses or GCSEs in 2021 have already experienced significant disruption. Please consider at what point alternatives to these methods of assessment should be considered to ensure that individual students are not disadvantaged. If these alternatives were to be on a similar basis to those being used to determine grades for 2020, namely teacher assessments, please consider measures that could put in place from the beginning of the academic year so that we can ensure that this was done in as fair and rigorous manner as possible in order to maintain everyone's confidence in the grades awarded.*