



**Mercia School**  
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Headteacher: Mr Dean Webster  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Rhona Dodds

Our ref: DW/GD

18 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Mercia Pupils Return to School 4 January 2021**

Thank you all for your support throughout what has been a challenging year.

The Department for Education (DfE) have released new guidance to Headteachers regarding opportunities for schools to mass test pupils and staff from January. This is in response to the growing number of schools who are isolating hundreds of pupils and key staff.

At Mercia School, we have had very few positive cases and as a result maintain an excellent attendance. Even if you include those that are self-isolating, our percentage attendance is above the national average figure for 2019, before the pandemic. This is truly amazing and a testament to the commitment of our pupils and families towards education - Thank you. This is also true of the staff who have the best attendance record in the city. This has meant we have not had one supply teacher in the school since our inception. I am sure you will agree that in the current climate, this is exceptional, and we should all be thankful that we are in such a good position.

The DfE propose that secondary schools open on 11 January after the Christmas break rather than the 4<sup>th</sup> January, to ensure mass testing stations can be in place. However, they do suggest school should open as normal for vulnerable and key worker children.

**Therefore, Mercia School will be open to all pupils on 4 January as planned.** I believe all pupils are vulnerable to achieving their educational potential, due to the extended time out of school previously. Equally, we have a significant number of parents who are key/critical workers and need to support the country's efforts of recovery. I expect all pupils back in school, raring to start the term.

The detail around mass testing is thus far thin. When I receive further information I will share it with you. Please be reassured the guidance does state that your consent is needed before any school Covid test can be administered. It is optional. I will not be administering any tests until training and responsibilities are clearly defined. Please be assured we will communicate with you and take any responsibilities seriously.

Ideally testing should only take place for those we have identified as a close contact to a positive case in school as this will reduce self-isolation for Mercia pupils. We have great trust in our pupils and parents and current Track and Trace measures have worked. We will continue to implement our current measures rigorously to reduce the spread of the virus. Please make sure your child has a pocket sanitiser as this helps reduce time at stations. Please also be aware that we are ever mindful at school and have safety at the forefront of our minds.

As ever, I will update you with any changes over the Christmas period if necessary. Your child has brought home their booklets as a precaution only. This is just in case further guidance suggests working from home. Trust that we will communicate with you as and when necessary.

Thank you all for your continued support, I hope the coming festive break allows you to reflect on a difficult year whilst being optimistic for a prosperous 2021. We are looking ahead and have confidence that we can tackle any challenges thrown at us!

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Webster', written in a cursive style.

**Mr D Webster**  
**Headteacher**