

**Breakspeare School**

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Dear Parents and Carers,

This week the country has paused to reflect on the COVID-19 journey that started a year ago. It has been a roller-coaster ride of rapid changes that have significantly influenced our private lives, the operational organisation of our schools and how we work. It is very energising to be able to be cautiously optimistic about the future months; as infection rates continue to stabilise and decrease whilst at the same time the vaccination programme is rapidly moving on.

We have made a short video to show our gratitude to parents, carers, students and staff within our community. Many things have been so very difficult and challenging but what has kept us going and moving forward has been our mutual support and appreciation. Thank you each and every one of you! The video can be found on the YouTube channel and Facebook page of 'The Sunflower Federation Schools'. The video is called 'Happy.'

Since my last letter, we have appointed two new teachers to Breakspeare School who will be starting with us in September 2021 : Caitlyn Filby and Maddy Bromwich – both are experienced SEN-teachers who are moving from different local authorities to Hertfordshire. Caitlyn and Maddy are currently working in SLD-schools similar to Breakspeare. We are also recruiting for another deputy for the September start.

A couple of important reminders

- **If your child is diagnosed with COVID-19 during the holidays please call 07342 884625** as a matter of urgency. We need to carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment and inform relevant parties accordingly also during the holidays. This is to keep everybody safe and to minimise virus transmissions in the school community.
- **We will keep our current COVID-19 risk assessment and operational structure in place during the first week after the Easter break:** Our COVID-19 risk assessment will be amended during the week after the Easter break including all of our operational processes. We are hoping that we will be able to extend our activities within and out-of-school during the first half of the summer term extending such activities towards the end of the term. Please note that all changes will be implemented in line with the PH, DfE and HCC guidance at time.
- **There is some additional DfE information at the end of this letter:** about lateral testing for secondary students, shielding guidance, regular testing during the Easter break, testing for parents and households and financial support when self-isolating.

During the academic year we have resourced and provided our families that are in need with some additional support such as:

- Free school meals during the holidays / self-isolation before the DfE scheme was implemented
- Additional food parcels (Watford Council)
- Food bank vouchers (schools being nominated Watford Food bank agencies)
- Laptops, routers or iPads to support remote learning (DfE / donations)
- School's family support worker (School funded)
- PE-equipment and food boxes (supported by HCC)

Allocations for these forms of support have been mainly for those families that are eligible free school meals but also for other families that have been identified as benefitting from the support. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Merja or Darren if the support described above would be useful to you.

The Sunflower Federation has been awarded a pilot position within Hertfordshire SLD/PNI schools to benefit from the NHS Mental Health Support Team work. This means that both of our schools will have a nominated EMHP (Educational Mental Health Practitioner) who will be working with the students, staff and parents. If you think that your child or you would benefit from mental wellbeing support please contact Merja or Darren for further details. I will share further information about this pilot after Easter break.

I wish you all happy holidays – hopefully the weather is kind to us and we can enjoy warmer and sunny days to help us to recharge our batteries.

After a well-deserved break, we are looking forward to having most of our students and staff back after Easter !

Thank you for your continued support  
Take care.  
Be safe.

Merja

## **DfE information**

### **1. Lateral testing for secondary students only:**

Only students in year 7 and above have been asked to complete rapid testing, also known as lateral flow tests, twice a week.

Home tests absolutely should not be carried out on children in nursery, infant or primary school. It is explicitly not recommended as part of the testing programme and we are concerned that it could hurt or cause injury to small children. If you are worried about small children or they develop symptoms, please seek advice from your GP or call 111.

Parents, carers and adults in support bubbles providing childcare are also being encouraged to take twice weekly lateral flow tests (on themselves, not children) at home. You can find your nearest collection site and order online at: [www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests](http://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests). You can also book a test for yourself at one of the county council's rapid test centres: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest).

### **2. Shielding guidance is being paused**

The government has [announced](#) that shielding guidance is being paused. From Thursday 1 April, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are no longer advised to shield. CEV people must continue to follow the [national restrictions](#) that are in place for everyone.

From Thursday 1 April, all CEV children should attend early years provision, school, college, wraparound childcare and out-of-school settings, unless they are one of the very small number of children under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

### **3. Regular testing of staff (all) and pupils (secondary) in schools and colleges over the Easter holiday**

It is important for staff (all) and students (secondary only) to keep testing through the Easter holidays to manage the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), as part of a regular habit of testing at home every 3-4 days (twice a week). NHS Test and Trace will be supplying sufficient test kits to schools and colleges to enable this to happen.

Those concerned please note Trish Poole's separate letter / email that was sent earlier this week.

#### 4. Testing for parents and households of staff and pupils

Parents and other adults in households with children or staff at nursery, who do not have symptoms, can now also access regular, rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) testing. This includes childcare and support bubbles.

There are [different ways](#) for a household, childcare or support bubble to collect or order their test to take at home, twice-weekly.

Secondary school and college students will continue to access testing through their school or college.

Children of primary school age (and below) are **not** being asked to take regular rapid tests.

Testing is voluntary, but strongly recommended to all who are eligible. Alongside the vaccine, washing hands, wearing face coverings, and maintaining social distancing, rapid testing plays a vital role in reducing transmission rates. Getting into the habit of regular testing as part of our everyday lives will help us all to play our part and do what we can to protect each other.

Following the success of the asymptomatic testing programme on the return to school and college, it is vital to keep testing at home throughout the Easter holidays and into the summer term.

- test twice a week at home from now on (all those who are able to)
- report results [online](#) as positive, negative or void. This information is critical in helping us to understand the prevalence of the virus across the country
- continue to test twice weekly over the Easter holidays
- test before returning to school or college for the summer term, either the night before, or morning of, the first day back, to find and isolate any positive cases

Families and households can also access [home test kits for adults](#).

#### 5. Financial support 'Test and Trace Support Payment'

Parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now able to apply for a [Test and Trace Support Payment](#) or discretionary payment of £500, if they meet the eligibility criteria.

- You must be employed or self-employed to get the payment.
- You need to claim within 42 days of you or your child's first day of self-isolation.

Please find further information

Who can apply: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme?utm\\_source=22%20March%202021%20C19&utm\\_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm\\_campaign=DfE%20C19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme?utm_source=22%20March%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19)

How to apply <https://www.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>