

31st December 2020

Dear parents and carers,

It feels highly unusual to be writing to you on New Year's Eve, but we are most certainly living in unusual times. Following the national announcement yesterday from the Secretary of State for Education, I wanted to be able to send out definitive plans that clarified our start of term arrangements. However, the messages from Gavin Williamson were muddled, confusing and contradictory. Overnight, there have been several developments and amendments to documents that were sent out to schools and I have spent today unpicking these with my senior leadership team. Ideally, schools would be playing an active role in helping shape the decisions about the education sector, but unfortunately we find out about the changes and arrangements at the same time as everyone else. This makes planning and communication very difficult and I appreciate how frustrating this is for parents, given the close proximity of the start of term.

Below, I have tried to summarise, as concisely as possible, what our arrangements are for all students from Monday 4th January onwards.

Week commencing	Year Groups	Provision
04.01.21	Year 7-11	All students working at home. Staff deliver Live Lessons or On Demand Resources via SMHW. Critical Workers and vulnerable students in school.
11.01.21	Year 11	In school for normal teaching.
11.01.21	Year 7-10	Students working at home. Staff deliver Live Lessons or On Demand Resources via SMHW. Critical Workers and vulnerable students in school.
18.01.21	Years 7-11	All students in school for normal teaching.

Students will be expected to log onto Show My Homework before 08:55am each day to access the work that has been set for them and see which of their lessons during that day will be conducted on Microsoft Teams. Students will need to keep all of the work they produce during the next two weeks and hand this in to their teachers when they are next in school. If you need support with our remote learning arrangements, please visit [this page](#) on our website.

If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of your child, please [email](#) their Personal Development Coach. If you have any safeguarding concerns about your own, or another child, please [email](#) Mr P Rhodes or Mrs A McFarlane.

Mass Testing

You may also be aware that schools are now required to become mass testing sites. Before Christmas (17th December) we were informed that schools would be able to become mass testing hubs, but this was not compulsory. Yesterday, it appears this has now changed and it is now mandatory for all secondary schools. The impact of mass testing in schools is that we would no longer need to send home large cohorts of close contacts following a positive case, therefore keeping more students in school. There will be weekly testing for staff and tests for all students (who opt in) when they return. We would then test close contacts over a 7 day period when positive cases are confirmed. There is a logistical mountain to climb with regard to establishing all of this, and we will be posting job opportunities for applicants to take on temporary roles within this testing system early next week. We will also have to send a form out for all parents to complete which gives permission for your child to be tested in school; we will include lots more information about this process alongside the form so that you can be fully aware of how it will work before you make a decision.

Finally

I hope 2021 brings us all a much more positive experience. The challenges of 2020 for UCC have been well documented and I know each family has had to deal with its own set of unique and difficult circumstances. I will always reach for the positives though, and I believe we have become a stronger, more united and more resilient school community, and I am very excited about the bright future for our school and our students. 2021 won't be plain sailing, in fact I think the first few months might be even harder than what we have already experienced, but I know our school community will collectively support each other and successfully rise to the challenges ahead.

Happy New Year. Take care and stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B Solly', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr B Solly
Principal