08th July 2021

Principal Update - 08th July 2021

Dear students, parents and guardians

As mentioned in the update early this week, the Secretary of State for Education outlined the proposals around stage 4 of the unlocking and the impact on schools and colleges. As with most announcements we are still awaiting the detail and written formal guidance and we obviously have the summer to fully work these into the college operations. These are still, of course, proposals and reliant on the reviews mentioned in the Prime Ministers statement on Monday.

It is also important to note that the new guidance also states that current mitigations such as face coverings, social distancing and bubble self-isolation may need to be re-introduced where there are local outbreaks. It is also likely that we will see further waves of Covid throughout the next few months.

In terms of a college like Carmel, the key change of guidance are as follows:

**Dealing with close contacts of positive cases**

“From 16 August, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID19 case. Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test.

18-year-olds will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday, to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

**Asymptomatic testing and confirmatory PCR tests**

Over the summer, staff and secondary and college pupils should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open, such as summer schools and out of school activities based in school settings.

All secondary school and college pupils should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.

Settings may commence testing from 3 working days before the start of term and can stagger return of pupils across the first week to manage this. Pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed. Staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed. Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19. If the PCR test is
taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the pupil can return to school, as long as the individual doesn’t have COVID-19 symptoms.

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)

All CEV children and young people should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.”

Transport

There is not yet any guidance regarding the rules to be followed on school and college transport for September. As mentioned in my update earlier this week, we are still looking at the services, routes and operational rules that will apply to Carmel next term. Please check with the transport section on the college website. We will update and confirm any changes to services when we have further guidance. https://www.carmel.ac.uk/applying/student-transport/

Carmel response (for now)

The College will continue to plan for the next term over the summer break. We expect the guidance to be updated further and of course we still need to wait until next week to have the confirmation that stage 4 of unlocking will commence from the 19th July. I am planning to update you all with the final arrangements before the start of term in September, and as last year we will ensure that all students have a clarity about the risk assessment the college is currently working to arrangements around testing and isolation and the day-to-day operation of the college site.

We are continuing with the current timetable into next year as we feel that this gives us greatest flexibility to ensure we can continue to provide an outstanding level of teaching and learning whatever the circumstances. We do want students to be able to spend more time in college to allow them to access a much deeper and richer college experience and something akin to the type of experience we were delivering before the pandemic.

The afternoons of Monday and Wednesday will be devoted to college wide enrichment as well as more subject tutorial and support sessions for all students. We are blessed with many study spaces at college, specifically designed for 16-19-year olds and we want to give all of our students full access to these. We are very aware that one of the biggest impacts of the pandemic has been the challenge of developing friendships and socialising with new people. This was one of the real joys of the college before Covid and we are determined to move away from students just coming into college for lessons then going home; our outstanding Sixth Form experience and environment is much more than that.

All of this re-balance will of course be carried out with the primary aim, as we done for the last 18 months in prioritising the safety of our students, community and staff first. We have managed to keep the college open for the majority of the lockdown periods and thankfully Covid spread within
college has been extremely minimal. Please be assured that we will continue to be highly vigilant and robust in how we continue to manage this horrible virus.

For now, I would like staff and students (with their families) to concentrate on enjoying the summer and having a well-deserved break. The College management team will continue to monitor and plan our approach to next term. The next key deadline for us at college is the week beginning the 9th August; we have a busy week with A level and BTEC Level 3 results on 10th and GCSE results day on 12th August. We are enrolling our new students on the 12th and 13th August and I am planning to send out an update to all students and parents at the end of that week.

Best wishes

[Signature]

Mike Hill
Principal