

# NEWSLETTER

For all parents and carers of students at Sir George Monoux College  
26 February 2021



## ARRANGEMENTS FOR COLLEGE RE-OPENING ON 8 MARCH

Thank you very much for reading this important communication. I hope that you and your family are making good progress and looking forward with some optimism to the months ahead. At this point I want to outline the arrangements that we are putting in place to enable our students to return to college from 8 March and also to highlight what we are doing to ensure that we support students, in particular in their academic goals. I would briefly like to praise our students for their hard work since January under lockdown restrictions.

Attendance rates for online lessons have been high and the vast majority of students have successfully kept up to date with tasks set by their teachers. Our teachers have worked skilfully to deliver lessons online, although we are now very keen to re-open classrooms. We have continued with our Calling Home Taskforce, ensuring that all students have received at least one call per week to check on health, well-being and academic progress. We kept the college open for students wishing to study independently in the library; talking to those students who have been coming in reminds me how much our students value Monoux as a place to be.

Nevertheless, we are very much aware of the impact that the Covid pandemic has had on the lives of young people. We will be committed and resourceful at the college in ensuring that our young people are not disadvantaged by the upheaval of the last 12 months. We do not want our students to lose their sense of personal ambition for the future as a result of the sacrifices, compromises and anxieties that have prevailed in the lives over this period. With the prospect of an end to restrictions and the hope of a reduction in the threat presented by the virus, now is the time for students to push hard to develop themselves, interact with others, being interested in the world around them and start to map out their future.

These are the first steps:

## **COMING BACK TO COLLEGE**

- The college will be fully open from 8 March. All lessons will resume in classrooms from that date and students will follow their normal timetable with 90 minute lessons. Students who have a lesson in period 1 must also arrive earlier for their Entry Period.
- The library will be open each morning before period 1 and will remain open until 6.30pm. It is also open on Saturdays and during the holidays.
- Sports activities will resume, but activities will be outdoors only in the first instance.
- Our welfare support teams and progress coaching team will be on site to support students each day.
- We are not planning to continue our schedule of online teaching weeks as was the case in the Autumn Term. This was useful in helping students to learn how to study online but in the Summer Term we will only use online learning if a group is self-isolating.

## **IMPORTANT EVENTS TO SUPPORT THE RETURN**

We believe that some of the key ways in which we can support students as they come out of the national lockdown are to build optimism about the future, to be developing healthy habits, routines and to be surfacing a confident personality that will excel in employment or at university. With this in mind:

- On 25 – 26 February we ran an extensive online careers and higher education conference for all students. This enabled students to hear from employers and universities about the opportunities that lie ahead and what students should be doing now to plan for their future.

- On 4 – 5 March we will hold our termly Passport Days for all first year students. On these days students will start researching into their next destination (e.g. university or apprenticeship), they will assess their progress towards Monoux First Year Graduation and they will have a one-to-one meeting with a teacher to agree targets for the Summer Term.
- As outlined above, classroom teaching starts on 8 March. We will also re-start our Catch Up arrangements, keeping students working in the library after 4.00pm if they are behind on work.
- On 9 March we will host an online Parents' Evening. Information about the evening will be sent out to you shortly. You will be able to register and book online. We are also sending out to you reports on students' progress.
- During week commencing 22 March we will have a themed week to encourage students to turn off their electronic devices and laptops, creating time to be mindful and to explore good mental health.

As you will no doubt already be aware, we are guiding first year students towards “graduation” into their next year at college. Students who do not graduate will not have a place at the college next year but I want to explain once again that we are encouraging students to push for a Bronze, Silver or Gold Graduation for which there will be end-of-year rewards. I have previously outlined this scheme to you in more detail.

## **COVID TESTING ARRANGEMENTS**

- It is important that students and their families continue to be highly vigilant for symptoms of the Covid virus and to stay at home and arrange to get a test if symptoms are evident. Students must not come to college if they have symptoms and must self-isolate if any member of the household tests positive or if asked to do so by the NHS tracing service.
- The college is supporting the national effort to further reduce the spread of Covid through testing:
- The college has set up a Covid Lateral Flow Testing facility in the Sports Hall. We have a team of staff trained to run the facility safely.
- All students will be offered (from today) the chance to be regularly tested. We strongly encourage students to choose to be tested at college from 4 March onwards. Students who agree to be tested by giving their consent online will be scheduled for a test. Please can I request that you talk at home about the availability of these tests and the benefits of opting in?

- Testing is voluntary and it is not a requirement that students will be tested before coming back to college for lessons.
- From 15 March onwards we will be providing all students with Covid Testing Kits for use at home but we will continue to run a testing facility at the college, albeit at reduced capacity.

## **OTHER SAFETY MEASURES**

The college has had safety measures and social distancing rules in place throughout the pandemic and I have written to you about these previously. These measures will continue but I want to draw your attention to the following changes:

- From 8 March until at least the end of the Spring Term (1 April) students will be required to wear a mask in lessons. Whilst this will potentially limit communication in lessons (not too much!), this step follows government advice. Although the government assures us that there are significantly fewer instances of Covid in the community, the transmission potential is high. Masks will reduce transmission.
- If a member of a teaching group (student or staff) tests positive for Covid, all members of that group will be required to self-isolate as a precaution.
- Students who are exempt from wearing face coverings will be given a new identity card. This replaces our previous exemption scheme and only those students who have provided medical evidence will be allowed to carry an exemption card. We contacted families about this in January and we have a clear understanding of which students qualify.
- Students can eat at set times in the canteen, café or Zone, but we encourage eating outside as, obviously, masks are not worn when eating. We have a new outside catering cabin to reduce numbers eating indoors.
- Students who are not wearing a mask will be sent home as a disciplinary action and given a 1 day suspension. We will no longer give warnings to students.

## **ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING**

The government has announced that schools and colleges will award grades for students completing qualifications this summer. We are broadly content with this plan and Holly Bembridge (Vice Principal for Curriculum & Quality) has already started to explain to students what will happen between now and the publication of results in August. Full details will come in due course. At this time, please note:

- All students will be assessed through a range of methods (tests, assignments, coursework, practical work etc.) in order that grades are based on evidence. Students will need to keep studying hard until late-June. Grades will be subject to an internal quality assurance process.
- The system allows teachers to ensure that students are tested on what they have been taught, taking disruption to teaching into account.
- Year 1 A Level students will have mock exams from 22 March.

## **POLICY ON TRAVELLING AWAY DURING TERM TIME**

Students must not travel away (including abroad) during the term time. Additionally, it is currently illegal to go on holiday or travel for leisure at any time. Given the government's guidance ([National lockdown: Stay at Home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)) there are virtually no circumstances at all when it would be acceptable for a young person to travel abroad. Students who do so are at risk of not achieving and, in the case of first years, not graduating.

## **SUMMER PLANS**

Please note that grades will be published on 10 August (12 August for GCSE). This is earlier than normal and families should take this into consideration if planning holidays or other trips. Students need to be prepared to sort out university places etc from 10 August onwards.

We also hope to announce plans shortly for summer school and summer camp provision at Monoux! For example:

- A summer school for Year 1 A Level students pushing for the highest grades involving “masterclasses” and cultural visits (e.g. to museums) to build up knowledge.
- A summer camp for students seeking organised activities, sports, leisure etc, maybe even a picnic in the park!!

On that very positive thought I will conclude. Thank you very much for your attention to this message. I hope that you will join me and my team at the online Parents' Evening on 9 March.

**Dave Vasse**

Principal