

Highlands College
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Monday 18th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, we would like to thank you all for your ongoing support during these challenging times. At the time of writing, we are experiencing little disruption in College as a result of CV-19, and most importantly, no seriously ill members in our community.

Attendance at College

In the weeks leading up to the Christmas Holidays, some parents and carers became concerned about whether sending students to college was a safe and responsible thing to do. We know families worried that if they or their children had to self-isolate over Christmas, this would ruin what should be a very happy time. In response to these concerns, the Minister agreed to 'flexible' attendance for the last week of term.

Since that time, we have continued to work with colleagues in Central Government to put measures in place, taking three additional days to prepare before students returned. This included asking all College staff and Further Education students to be screened for COVID-19, assessing capacity for teaching, and reviewing Health and Safety Plans. We were very impressed by the take up of the testing programme by our students and staff.

We wanted to make sure that it was clear that College attendance is mandatory from Monday 11th January 2021. Whilst parents' concerns about sending their children to College are understandable, it is important that students do return to education wherever possible. Both research and our own experience of College closures show that most young people experience some level of loss and anxiety through prolonged non-attendance, and a lack of structure in their lives. Succeeding in their studies and improving their life chances by achieving their potential are also positive factors for them. We can also provide extra support services in College for those who need them.

We also know that - in a small number of cases - profound medical needs will make it impossible for students to attend College. For these learners, we ask that you continue to communicate with us. We will support any student whose medical advice is that they are required to shield.

Our students' wellbeing whilst in College is our number one concern. Regular testing and review will ensure that the environment remains safe. College staff will do their best to support parents, carers and students by answering questions, showing them the measures they have taken to protect the College community, and helping to address any issues which prevent young people from returning.

It is vital that we work together in partnership. Please contact the personal tutor in the first instance as your primary contact who will follow up with the appropriate staff or lead.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jo Terry-Marchant'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jo Terry-Marchant
Principal