



WALTON HIGH

Leading Learning

Walnut Tree Campus: Fyfield Barrow Milton Keynes MK7 7WH

Brooklands Campus: Fen Street Milton Keynes MK10 7HE

Tel: 01908 677954

www.waltonhigh.org.uk



Executive Principal: Michelle Currie
Principal: Sharon Alexander

Chair of Governors: Ayser Asif
Business Manager: Sukh Singh

6 January 2021

COVID-19 Update 30

Dear Parents

In Update 29, to forewarn parents I wrote *"I suspect that the latest statements (by Ministers) advising that secondary schools will open fully on 18 January are likely to be just as unreliable."* which turned out to be wholly accurate. I think it was clear to most people at the time that, given the public health situation and the fact that schools act as vectors for transmission between households, this position was untenable. However, although it is very disappointing that schools will be closed to most students until after February half term, the greater clarity over the minimum period of this partial closure is welcomed by staff and I am sure appreciated by most parents.

In his statement to the House of Commons, the Prime Minister advised that this time the lockdown is to be eased gradually and that schools will be the first to reopen. This is something we welcome. We hope that schools will be reopened for all students even if this necessitates a staggered return or attendance on a rota basis in the first instance. Hopefully, sufficient notice will be given to ensure staff, students and parents are all confident that it is safe to return.

BTEC and CTEC exams

Unfortunately, the Government has created a degree of confusion surrounding the external BTec/CTec module exams scheduled for January. Initially schools were advised that these would definitely be going ahead. This has now changed to schools may hold the exams if they think it is safe. Walton High's position is that it is possible to hold these in a safe way and we know that students who have been working hard in preparation for them welcome the opportunity to sit these exams.

GCSE, A level and BTec/CTec exams in the summer

The Government has confirmed that summer GCSE and A level exams will not go ahead and will be replaced with teacher assessment. The much discredited algorithm applied last year will not be used again this year. There is still likely to be a process of moderation to ensure a degree of consistency across schools but details of what this will entail are not yet available.

As yet, the Government has not advised whether the BTec/CTec exams in the summer will go ahead as scheduled. We will update parents and students once we know what is happening.

Whilst we understand that some students in Year 11 and Year 13 may feel demotivated by the exams announcement, it is now even more important that they remain focused and engaged with remote learning. This will ensure the school has the evidence needed to support their teachers' assessment of what they know, understand and can do. Students will then be more likely to get the grades they deserve in the summer.

Asymptomatic testing of staff and students in school

As [Annex A](#) shows, the virus continues to circulate widely in the local community.

Walton High's preparations to establish a programme of asymptomatic testing for staff and students are well underway and we have not once had to ask the armed forces for any help or advice.



On both campuses we will use the Sports Hall as the test centre. This means that all practical PE lessons will continue to be held outside.

Rather than have the number of bays recommended, we have decided to set up the maximum number we can accommodate in order to create the potential capacity to test more people in the same amount of time.

This means at the Brooklands campus there is the capacity to test 12 people concurrently, whilst at Walnut Tree the number will be 11.



Allowing 7 minutes for the self-administration of the swab test, the processing of the sample and the cleaning of the test bay, it should be possible for Walton High to test between 77 (Walnut Tree) and 84 (Brooklands) people in an hour. Per week this would equate to up to 2,310 tests at Walnut Tree and 2,520 at Brooklands.

With experience, it is likely that both the test subject and processor will become quicker and more efficient.

The response to the opportunities advertised has been very pleasing and we hope to have sufficient people to use all the bays we have created. This means that if the Government provides Walton High with the number of Lateral Flow Device tests needed, we would be able to test all students who give their consent on a weekly basis rather than just staff and close contacts of positive cases as set out in existing guidance.

Mr Mapesa has successfully trained his first cohort of Team Leaders and Processors with more people to be trained on a rolling basis over the next few weeks.

We are very pleased that the overwhelming majority of parents have supported this major public health initiative, which should allow schools to reopen safely sooner than may otherwise be possible.

It is the case that evidence of a negative COVID-19 test is already a requirement to receive elective hospital treatment, to be employed in certain occupations and to travel to many countries. Students participating in the programme will be getting used to this process in the safe school environment. This will help them adjust to this new aspect of life and prevent refusing to take a test becoming a barrier to future opportunities.

If you have not yet indicated whether or not you give your consent for your child to carry out a self-test for COVID-19, please do so as soon as possible by using this link to the online form https://bit.ly/C19_Consent rather than the Word document sent with Update 29. I'd like to apologise to the Admin Team for not including an online form in the first instance and promise I will drag myself into the 21st Century soon!

Please remember, you may withdraw consent at any time and may also change your mind about not giving consent.

Remote learning

There was a bit of a bumpy start to the delivery of remote learning for some students on Tuesday as a result of the power cut that affected the Walnut Tree area on Monday night which upset the servers. The IT Team

worked quickly to remove the gremlins and teachers improvised until the network was back up and running. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Some parents have contacted the school to ask what they should expect from remote learning. As before, students should follow their normal timetable with one difference. In September we introduced a staggered day by moving Session 1 for students in Years 10 – 13 to the end of the day to make Session 6. As there is no need for the staggered day when students are working remotely, in most cases Session 6 has been moved back to Session 1. If the lesson has not been moved back to first thing in the morning, the class teacher will have advised their class accordingly.

Following feedback from students, more lessons will now be delivered “live” with students joining using MS Teams. Teachers have received additional training on what makes an effective online lesson and continue to welcome constructive feedback. Students who are not able to join the lesson live will still be able to access their learning later as it will be available on Firefly.

All students are very familiar with Firefly and Years 8 -13 and most of Year 7 know how to use MS Teams. Guidance on how to take part in live lessons using MS Teams is on the Firefly portal. Students who continue to experience difficulties should contact their Tutor who will be happy to help.

To engage with the learning, students may need to use Microsoft Office Applications and, if they have not already downloaded these, they are available to access free of charge using MKET’s account. The products are licensed through a student’s email address, which is revoked when they leave the school.

Office 365

Microsoft’s instructions on how to install Office on a PC or Mac:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/download-and-install-or-reinstall-office-365-or-office-2019-on-a-pc-or-mac-4414eaaf-0478-48be-9c42-23adc4716658>

Instructions for iOS devices:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Install-and-set-up-Office-on-an-iPhone-or-iPad-9df6d10c-7281-4671-8666-6ca8e339b628>

Instructions for Android:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Install-and-set-up-Office-on-an-Android-cafe9d6f-8b0c-4b03-b20a-12438a82a22d>

In addition to live lessons and tasks set via Firefly, teachers will also make use of a range of other online learning resources to support students’ learning, such as GCSE Pod; Kerboodle; My Maths; MathsWatch; PixL Apps; Dynamic Learning. Again, these resources are already available to support learning across the curriculum in Year 7 to Year 11.

The BBC has announced that it will be broadcasting lessons on BBC2 for secondary age students and The Oak Academy also has thousands of lessons students may access to supplement the lessons delivered by their teachers [Home - Oak National Academy \(thenational.academy\)](https://www.thenational.academy). No student is in a position to tell their parent that they have nothing to do or they have finished everything!

Students will be able to use their school email accounts and MS Teams to contact teachers for additional support. In the event that their teacher is unavailable due to ill health or other commitments, another teacher will be available to answer their query.

Any parent who has a concern about the remote learning their child is receiving should contact the school via feedback@mket.org.uk. The most appropriate person will investigate your concern and get back to you with a response.

Overwhelmingly the feedback received from parents has been constructive and supportive and this is very much appreciated. The quality of what we are able to provide for all children is now even better than during the first lockdown as a result of this feedback and we are all very grateful for your support.

Support for students

Below is an overview of the range of support we are providing for our students.

Teachers are creating engaging online lessons and are providing support via Firefly and Microsoft Teams as well as responding to emails and MS Teams calls.

Subject Leaders are providing advice and support for teachers in their teams and sharing best practice as we continue to learn together.

Personal Tutors are using their weekly Tutor Tracking and Tutor sessions to monitor students' engagement with the lessons set. They are also contacting students to providing advice and support. If a Tutor is concerned about a student falling behind, they will contact parents to discuss and look to work with families to remove any barriers to ensure no student misses out.

Heads of Year are supporting tutors in their work and leading on PSHE lessons in Tutor sessions.

Learning Support staff are in regular contact with students on the SEND register; checking lessons and ensuring appropriate differentiation is in place; responding to requests for assistance from students and alerting subject staff to subject specific queries.

Pastoral staff are in regular contact with vulnerable students; responding to requests for support; signposting external support; monitoring our safeguard portal (MyConcern) and responding as needed.

The Pastoral Director will again be writing to all students giving advice on how to keep safe whilst away from school and what to do should they have any concerns.

Most staff, on a rota basis, are also supervising the children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are completing the online lessons set by their teachers in school.

Finance and administrative staff are keeping the school and Trust functioning which enables others to provide the support detailed above.

Free school meals

For students entitled to free school meals, weekly hampers will be distributed or available for collection.

In recent weeks, many parents will have seen their financial situation change significantly and may now find their child is now entitled to free school meals. The list of eligible benefits can be found on the council's websiteⁱ. If you believe this applicable to you, please contact the Finance Team by emailing finance@mket.org.uk or calling 01908 677954.

Computers and internet access

We received the delivery of 126 laptops from the DfE on Wednesday but due to their low specification it is taking longer than usual to format the devices. However, we should have 50 to distribute on Friday with the rest following next week. We have also requested additional 4G routers for internet access but these have not yet arrived.

Mr Laverty, the Assistant Principal leading on ensuring all students are able to access their online learning, has ranked the requests we have received to date and prioritised those students who have no suitable device to work on and/or no internet access.

If your child is unable to complete their remote learning as a result of not having the resources needed and you have not yet let us know, please do so by using the link to the online form http://bit.ly/WH_IT_Request.

And finally . . .

Following Update 29, I received two emails complaining that my letters are too political. The parents instructed me to refrain from making comments and only give parents the facts.

I am now in my 18th year as Principal of Walton High and in that time I have always acted impartially and put the interests of the students I serve first. I fully appreciate that my style of writing may not be to everyone's liking but I will continue to share my honest opinion on things I believe have an impact on students, staff or the efficient and effective running of the school.

One of the great strengths of this country is the freedom of speech we enjoy and our fundamental right to agree to disagree. I am also of the view that parents (and students) are intelligent enough to be able to form their own opinions and take or leave any observations I may make.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards



Michelle Currie
Executive Principal



Annex A

5 January 2021 at 4:22pm

Cases in Milton Keynes ▾

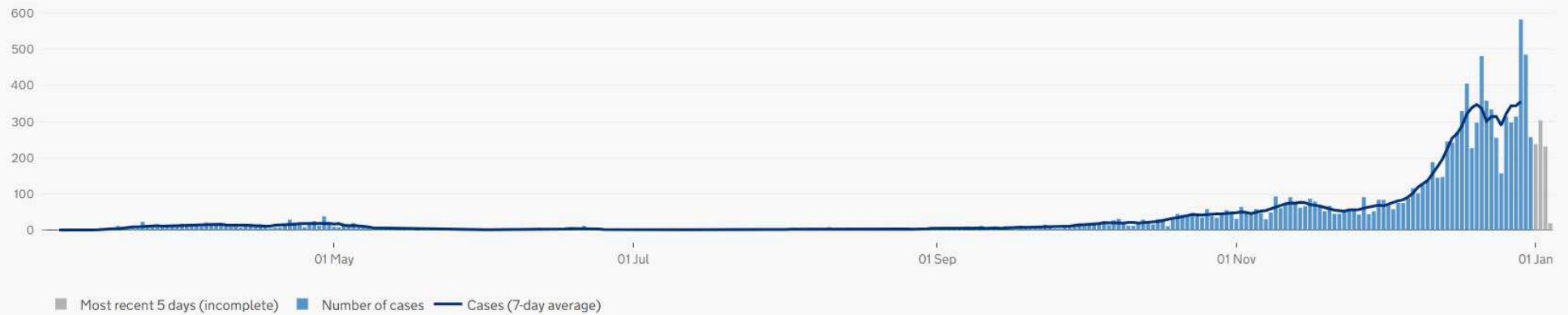
People tested positive

| Daily | Total |
|------------|---------------|
| <u>494</u> | <u>12,009</u> |

Cases by specimen date

Number of people with at least one positive COVID-19 test result (either lab-reported or lateral flow device), by specimen date. Individuals tested positive more than once are only counted once, on the date of their first positive test. Data for the period ending 5 days before the date when the website was last updated with data for the selected area, highlighted in grey, is incomplete.

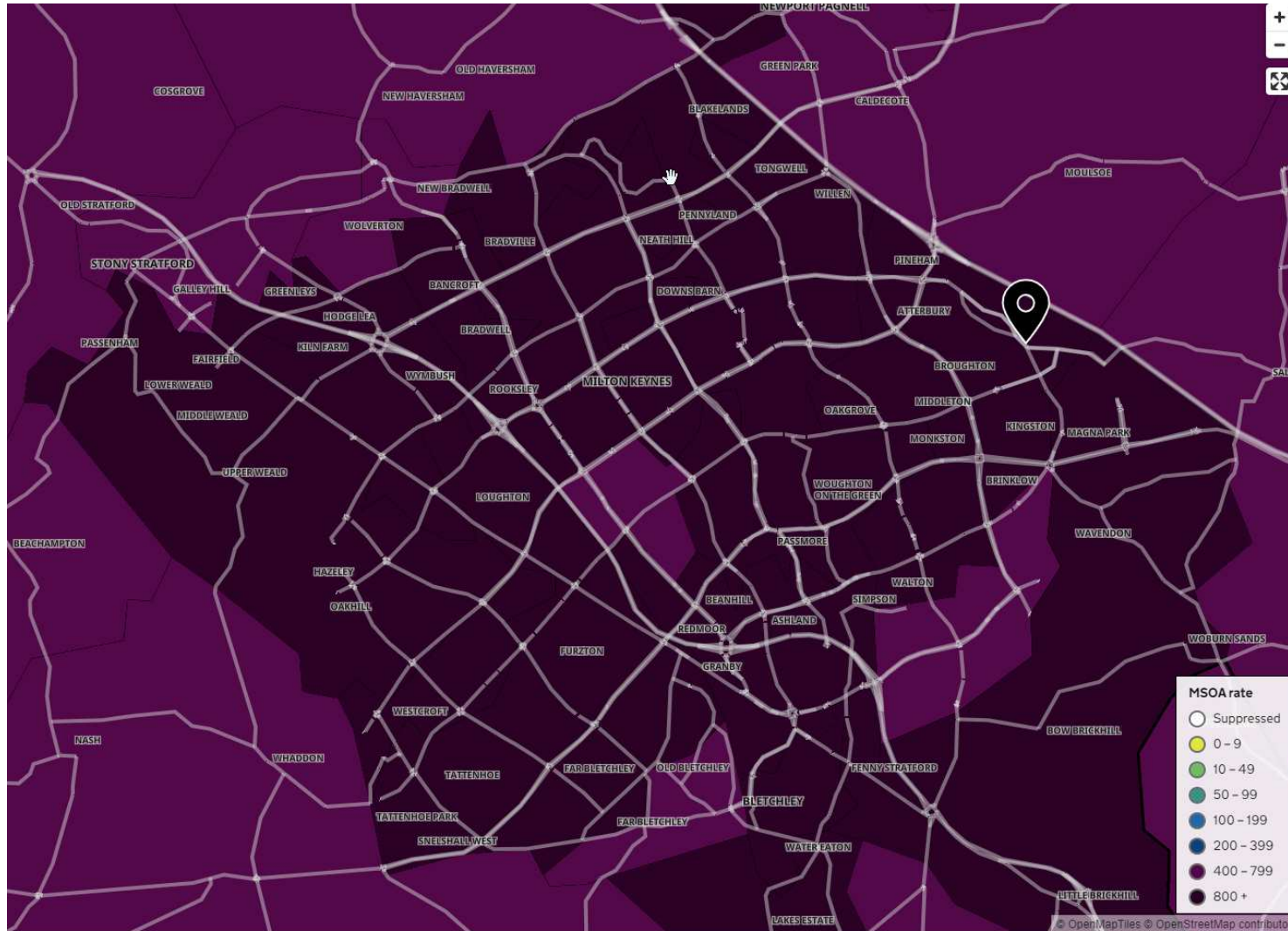
Daily Cumulative Data About



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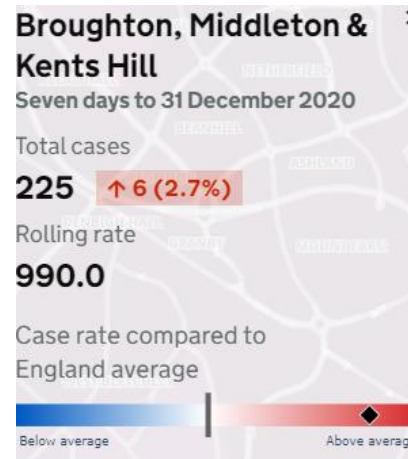
Enabling - Enhancing - Enriching

Seven-day rolling rate of new cases by specimen date ending on 31 Dec 2020



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Cases

People tested positive in Milton Keynes

Latest data at **local authority (upper tier)** level provided on 5 January 2021

Daily
494

Last 7 days
2,568 ↑ 188 (7.9%)

▶ Rate per 100k resident population: **893.3**

Deaths

Deaths within 28 days of positive test in Milton Keynes

Latest data at **local authority (upper tier)** level provided on 5 January 2021

Daily
7

Last 7 days
31 ↑ 8 (34.8%)

Healthcare

Patients admitted in Milton Keynes University Hospital

Latest data at **healthcare trust** level provided on 27 December 2020

Daily
19

Last 7 days
106 ↓ 4 (-3.6%)

ⁱ <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/free-school-meals>

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