

Thu 08/04/2021 10:59

Dear colleagues,

Free Twice Weekly Testing

Many of you will have seen the [PMs announcement](#) about the availability of free rapid lateral flow tests (strangely known as LFDs) so that everyone in England can take a test at home twice a week. It's another step towards being able to reopen society by helping to identify those of us who may be asymptomatic as well as flushing out new variants. Right from the start of the pandemic FSC agreed that we would always follow government guidelines, so I'd like to encourage all staff to take part. It's another way in which we can 'do our bit' by keeping ourselves and others safe, but as we open up our centres it can add another level of confidence for visitors along with all the other visible Covid-Secure measures that we have in place. This is important as some schools are reporting that they are keen to come to us, but some parents are less keen.

HR are finalising the details and checking GDPR issues but as home testing leapfrogs the previous concept of workplace testing, it should make things much more straightforward. What we are looking at is simply asking staff to report positive tests on a self-cert form as for other illnesses. This is for England only at the moment, we are still waiting on announcements for Wales and Scotland. I know that it's another 'ask' on the list of 'asks' this year to which you have adjusted with very good grace and I believe that staff adaptability is one of the reasons why FSC has survived thus far. A big government campaign is due to start shortly but as for the practicalities, I understand that the NHS App will be updated, and free tests will be available from participating pharmacies, testing centres and via home delivery. We will keep you updated.

Waiting for the White Smoke

We are still waiting to hear the results of the review into school visits advice for Wales and Scotland, and the guidance for residential to be signed off by DfE and Public Health England.

Summer School Guidance for England

The DfE has published guidance for secondary schools on providing [Summer Schools](#) with a very strong steer on the transition into year 7 from primary schools. With a mixture of academic and enrichment activities recommended, there is an encouraging number of references to activities such as nature expeditions, field trips, map reading, and team building. The guidance is also open to external organisations and partners providing input and staff (which will no doubt be a relief for teachers) and although familiarisation with the new school is seen as important, there is also a case study that included a short residential.

Yesterday's All Staff Zoom

If you didn't manage to make the excellent All Staff Zoom you can shortly catch up [here](#) on Moodle Training, Eco Skills and on being a Staff Rep. Last week's email included information on how to become a staff rep and you can find my previous emails on the [staff news pages](#).

Dame Cheryl Gillan

I was sad to hear of the death of FSC Amersham MP Dame Cheryl Gillan. She took a genuine interest in FSC, was often one of the first to respond to our letters and had been particularly active this year. We only recently exchanged emails as she was keen to follow up on our ongoing difficulties with the DfE.

OFQUAL Blog

I like using this catch up to pass on useful or helpful information from other organisations and I came across this [blog](#) aimed to reassure GCSE and A level students that you may know who are worried about the impact of the changes to exams and assessment.

Very Special Mention

Lorna Shipp, FSC's longest serving member of staff is retiring. Having spent over 40 years at Rhyd-y-creuau, Lorna was given the number 10001 on the new payroll system. She served on the Joint Staff Committee but became famous for her fancy dress costumes at staff conferences, events which I understand she enjoyed hugely. Over her many happy years with FSC, Lorna's warm welcome would have been the first thing that tens of thousands of our visitors would have experienced as they and their muddy boots arrived in reception. We will miss her and all the FSC knowledge that she has built up over her career with us. We wish her a very long and happy retirement.

Keep well and stay safe

Mark