



20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

### **COVID-19 Cases**

Further to my letter to you on the 11<sup>th</sup> October about increased Covid cases within school I am sure you have picked up in media reports that Covid 19 case rates in Wiltshire and the surrounding Local Authorities continue to rise significantly.

In the last 10 days we have seen a sharp increase of positive Covid tests amongst students. We currently have just over 90 students (mainly within Years 7-10) with confirmed positive PCRs, but also a significant number who are awaiting PCR results having had positive LFD results or who have possible Covid symptoms. This very much matches the national and local patterns that we are seeing. This is also on top of the issue reported in the media last week of a large number of positive PCR tests from the South West being misreported as negative and news reports yesterday evening indicating this is a significant contributing factor in the increased case rates within our region.

We are monitoring the situation daily and liaising with the local Health Protection Team. We continue to be reassured that although our case rates are increasing, we maintain a relatively low residual rate of Covid compared to other Education Institutions in the area and the control measures we introduced on the 11<sup>th</sup> October will be helping to slow the increase of cases that we are experiencing. Public Health have asked that we keep these current control measures in place after the half term for at least 14 days until they advise otherwise.

### **Existing control measures**

As way of reassurance, the following control measures will remain in place:

- Face coverings on school transport and inside communal areas
- Ventilation of all classrooms and indoor spaces
- Enhanced cleaning
- Hand sanitiser use on entry to and exit from each room
- Separate year group zone social areas at break and lunch time
- Halted Year Group assemblies and any other 'large gatherings and mixing' inside.
- Isolation and sending home of students who develop symptoms whilst in school

### **Important additional outbreak control measure: increased home testing**

In addition to the above control measures, it is now recommended by Public Health that students should increase the frequency of home LFD testing to at least three times per week. We ask that students continue testing over the Half Term break and before school on their return on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning.

We plan to issue students more test kits after the half term break but if families run out of test kits, please endeavour to order more via: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

The latest Home Test kits we will be distributing are the ACON Flowflex brand and the process is slightly different from the kits previously used, so please take the time to read the instruction booklet included in the pack before carrying out a test. The main changes are:

- Nasal swab only (no throat swab) – see page 11
- Different instructions for processing the swab and 4 drops of liquid to be placed in the specimen well – see pages 13 and 14
- The result can be read after 15 minutes but no longer than 30 minutes – see page 14.

I know that there will be many views about the measures we put in place; it is a constant balance that we are trying to maintain between transmission risk and continuity of education after such a disrupted 18 months. My priority is to be clear on the actions that we do decide to take so that it is as transparent as possible for everyone.

### **COVID-19 vaccination programme for 12 to 15-Year-olds rearranged for November 4th**

We have today been informed that our postponed Covid-19 vaccinations for 12- to 15-year-olds (originally planned for 27<sup>th</sup> September) have been rearranged for November 4th (the first Thursday back after half term).

The delay in schools being able to deliver the 12-15 vaccination programme seems a fairly common experience across the country and our last-minute postponement on the 27<sup>th</sup> September was as frustrating for us as it was for parents. I know many will be grateful of news of our rearranged date. Virgin Care (our School Immunisation Team) intend to send us the relevant information and links for consent on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November so we will forward that to you as soon as we receive it. If you intend to give consent would you please do so as soon as possible as the consent process closes on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 9.am. Please refer back to my letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> September with details of the 12-15 Covid Vaccination programme and lots of useful links and answers to frequently asked questions.

### **Vaccination centres for 12 to 15-year-olds**

The Chief executive of NHS England Amanda Pritchard told the health select committee earlier this week that 12 to 15-year-olds can now book a Covid-19 vaccination through the NHS booking service during half-term. The service has previously only been open to over-16s. This offer will run in parallel to the in-school vaccination programme. Parents of children aged 12 to 15 will receive a letter from the NHS with more information on the vaccination programme shortly, including information about how to book an appointment out of school, if this option is preferred. If this does become available later this week this will supplement the school-based vaccination programme planned for next term and could increase the speed at which this age group can get vaccinated.

### **How to stop coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading**

Clearly half term represents an opportunity for a 'fire break' to help settle case rates, but this will only be the case if social contact is reduced rather than increased in half term. The last thing we want to do is to interfere with people's plans and the lives of our brilliant students, especially when they have been so affected over the last 18 months, but the implications on education as we head into November are clear so I would ask you to think about managing this carefully over the break. It will also significantly help the vaccination programme in the first week back to have as many students in attendance as possible.

We are keen to ensure education can continue as normal as possible after the half term break; and we wish to advocate the following things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with coronavirus (COVID-19):

- **get vaccinated** – everyone aged 16 and over can [book COVID-19 vaccination appointments](#)
- **if you're symptomatic** -isolate and get a PCR test and isolate until a negative PCR result is returned (even if the LFD is negative)
- **if you think you are a close contact** -get a PCR test and follow close contact isolation guidance
- **wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly** throughout the day
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- consider your social contacts – every contact carries a COVID risk, even with vaccinated people so:
- consider whether to meet up at all
- meet people outside and avoid crowded areas
- open doors and windows to let in fresh air if meeting people inside
- wear a face covering if aged 11 and over when it's hard to stay away from other people – particularly indoors or in crowded places
- participate in weekly (now 3 times per week) LFD testing following national guidelines (recommended for 11 years and over). We encourage you to log your results here: <https://www.gov.uk/log-test-site-covid19-results>

### Further Information

Further information is available at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Thank you for your continued support of us and our brilliant young people who have been superb throughout Term 1.

Yours sincerely,



Rod Bell  
Headteacher