



1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

In response to the Covid related Government announcements over the weekend and further to my letter to you on the 15<sup>th</sup> November about increased Covid cases within our wider community and the joint decision by Public Health, The UK Health Security and South West Schools Commissioner to extend the period of enhanced outbreak control measures for all schools until the end of November, I write to provide you with a further update.

### **Covid-19 Cases within school**

Thank you for all that you continue to do to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 in the local community. Since our return from the October Half Term break we have seen a significant reduction in positive case rates within school (with less than a handful of cases currently and only 0.3% of our school population) so the control measures we have put in place, combined with your support, are having the desired effect.

The South West Directors of Public Health, UK Health Security Agency and the South West Schools Commissioner yesterday jointly agreed that the additional enhanced outbreak control measures advice and action set out in my previous letter are to be extended for all schools until the end of term where it will be reviewed again in January 2022.

### **New guidance due to Omicron Covid-19 variant**

On Saturday 27 November, the Prime Minister [announced](#) new temporary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK.

The new measures will be introduced as a precaution to slow down the spread of the variant while the government gathers more information. The government will continue to keep this under review as the situation develops.

Following this announcement the DfE contacted all educational settings on Sunday 28 November 2021 advising of changes to the Schools Operational Guidance. Further details can be found in the updated guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

The key points are as follows:

- From Monday 29 November, face coverings should be worn in all education and childcare settings in communal areas by staff, visitors and students in Year 7 and above, unless they are exempt. Students (in year 7 or above) should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport, unless they are exempt. The wearing of face coverings in classrooms (including exam venues) remains voluntary. We have had these measures in place within school since October as part of our enhanced outbreak control measures.

- The [current guidance on contact tracing and isolation](#) remains in place. In addition to these, any suspected or confirmed close contacts of the Omicron variant will be asked to isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status or age. You will be contacted directly by NHS Test and Trace and told to isolate.
- Schools and colleges “will want to consider whether to go ahead with planned international educational visits at this time, recognising the risk of disruption to education resulting from the need to isolate and test on arrival back into the UK”.

### **Plans for COVID-19 testing in education and childcare settings over the holidays and on return in January.**

In addition to asking that students continue to participate in weekly LFD home testing over the Christmas holiday, all secondary schools have been asked to prepare to test their pupils once on-site on their return in January, in a similar way that was required on their return in September. After this test on return, pupils should continue to test in line with government guidelines.

### **Arrangements for assisted COVID-19 testing on return in January and the need for a staggered return.**

At the start of Term 3 in January, before students are allowed to return to school, all students with consent will be required to take one on-site lateral flow device test in the same way as took place on their return to school in September.

All students will have their one assisted lateral flow device test in school and will then return home. If their LFD result returns as negative they will be able to start school the very next school day. If their LFD result returns positive they will then need to stay and home and follow the positive result self-isolation advice.

Unfortunately, because of the requirement to carry out one on-site assisted test on students’ return in January, we will need to stagger the start of term for different year groups in order to accommodate all our students through the test centre. We continue to work on this plan and our aim is to ensure all students with consent receive their one required test and return to learning with us on site as quickly as possible. We will be back in touch with these finalised plans as soon as we have confirmed them.

### **Covid-19 Vaccinations**

All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters, as vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on. Yesterday it was announced:

- all adults aged 18 to 39 years should be offered a booster dose, in order of descending age groups. To be given no sooner than three months after the primary course
- all severely immunosuppressed individuals should be offered their booster dose no sooner than three months after completing their primary course of 3 doses
- young people aged 12 to 15 years should receive a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, no sooner than twelve weeks after the first dose.

To book a vaccination, please visit: [Book or manage a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk).

### **Existing control measures - a reminder**

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

- Face coverings must be worn on school transport and inside in 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 where social distancing is difficult to maintain.
- Isolation and sending home of students who develop symptoms whilst in school
- Increased frequency (3 times a week) of home asymptomatic LFD testing
- close contacts of confirmed cases (including siblings of confirmed household cases) advised to take daily LFD tests while awaiting their PCR test results and to continue to attend school (unless they test positive or develop symptoms).

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

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 12 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/>

We will continue to monitor the situation closely, and keep you updated.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and continued support of us and our brilliant young people.

Yours sincerely,



Rod Bell  
Headteacher