

3rd January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you have enjoyed a restful holiday and would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a very happy new year. We are very much looking forward to welcoming students back to school on Wednesday 5th January.

On-site testing on return to school

I wrote to you on 17th December with an outline of the testing plans we have and a link to provide consent for the single COVID test that the government have asked us to supervise upon the start of term. You can find a [copy of that letter here](#).

Updated Guidance on the wearing of face coverings

On Sunday 2nd January, the government updated its guidance for the operation of secondary schools over the coming weeks. You can view the [full updated guidance here](#).

One of the most significant elements of the guidance relates to the wearing of face coverings. As you will recall, prior to the holidays we were asking students and staff to wear face coverings in all communal areas of the school. The government have recommended that this be extended to include the wearing of face coverings in lessons until at least 26th January and we will be following this advice. Staff will be wearing face coverings at times during lessons but will be able to remove them when giving instructions. Guidance around the wearing of face coverings, including the basis for exemptions, [can be found here](#).

In general, students have complied with requests for the wearing of face coverings very well. Our approach is to politely remind students when they are found not to be wearing a face covering. We ask that all students bring their own face covering into school, but we maintain a small supply of spare coverings in school should they be required.

I accept that there are different views on the wearing of face coverings, and I am sure that some of you will feel that this measure is unwelcome or unnecessary. This measure, along with many others, is being taken nationally to try and reduce the risk of transmission of Covid in school so that face to face teaching can be maintained for as long as possible. I hope that you will support that aim and recognise that we are trying to keep everyone as safe as possible.

I do not know how disrupted this term will prove, but it is clear from the data that cases are very high presently. This affects students and staff alike. We will do all that we can to minimise disruption, but I need to prepare you for the likelihood that staff absence will be higher than usual in the coming weeks. Where this happens, we will take every step possible to maintain face to face teaching and learning, but I cannot rule out the potential for remote learning to be implemented should it prove impossible to remain safely open for some or all students.

The importance of testing

Regular home LFD testing remains the very best way we have of identifying cases of Covid-19 and limiting the spread of infection. The majority of students maintained twice-weekly testing very well through the autumn term, but the rates of compliance did decline. It is so important that everyone, once again, resumes twice-weekly home testing.

We have a small residual supply of COVID tests, and these are available from the relevant House office for your child.

Revised isolation periods in the event of a positive case of Covid-19

The government have changed the guidance around the length of time individuals are expected to isolate following a positive PCR test. The guidance, which applies to students and staff in schools, [can be read here](#).

Yours faithfully



Simon Warburton
Principal