

03 December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers:

We are writing to you, following the announcements at the end of last week, to provide some information regarding the return to school after the Christmas break and the arrangements that we will be working hard to put into place.

Due to the increase in COVID-19 infection rates across the country, and the new Omicron variant, the Government has decided that more actions are necessary in secondary schools:

- Schools will be supported to run their in school testing programme to test students before they return to school in January, following the Christmas break.
- The return to school in January will be staggered to enable us to carry out and staff the onsite testing facility (the week commencing 4 Jan. '21), to enable us to get back to face to face education as quickly and as safely as possible.
- **Anyone who has been in contact with the new variant (Omicron) should isolate for 10 days.** We will provide more guidance on this when we get it from the Department for Education.

Testing is voluntary, but is strongly encouraged, as it plays an important role in reducing infection and transmission. Please do continue to use the lateral flow tests twice a week at home as this is supporting us to keep infections out of school.

We are requesting that for any families awaiting a PCR result following a positive lateral flow test, siblings remain at home until they receive a negative PCR test result. Should a PCR test return a positive result, please keep siblings at home to self-isolate until it is clear that the infection is not of the Omicron variant. We are mindful of the impact that more self-isolation will have on close contacts for a positive result of the Omicron variant and do not wish to affect more families than necessary. A cautious approach until Christmas will give us the best chance of spending time with our families over the break.

In addition, these restrictions are now having a considerable impact on staffing levels. We are at the point where we may need to consider asking some year groups to work from home. This will give us capacity to keep as many students in school as possible. We will aim to do this in as fair a way as possible to limit the impact on any one year group, and for as short a time as possible. We will send this notice out to parents and carers via MyEd app and put it on the website so please do check messages daily.

We will send more information with regards to the staggered return to school from the 4th January before the end of term. School transport will run, as usual, from Tuesday 4th January and in subsequent weeks and so will be available for students during the staggered first week back.

Thank you for your support and understanding at this exceptionally challenging time. We are really proud of the way that the local community has rallied together throughout the pandemic and we are strongly committed to doing all that we can to play our part in this collective effort. Equally, we hope that you appreciate that we are having to 'twist and turn' in relation to Government announcements in a way that does not always lend itself to effective and timely communication, but we are doing our best to keep you well-informed and continue to appreciate your constructive feedback.



Ms N Mason
Head of School