

Dear Families,

Last night the Department for Education issued an update to the guidance for close contacts of positive cases of Covid-19. The update is quoted below:

‘Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19

From Tuesday 14 December, a new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 is being introduced (including until the end of this term). All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 – whether Omicron or not – should take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days instead of self-isolating. Daily testing by close contacts will help to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 will help protect education settings by reducing transmission and will also help keep pupils in face-to-face education.

Once notified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, all eligible staff, pupils and students should take an LFD each day for 7 days and report the results through the [Online Reporting System](#) and to their setting. If they test negative, they can continue to attend their education setting. Outside of the education setting, they should continue to follow the advice set out in the [Sunday 12 December press release](#). This approach should also be adopted over the winter break and on return in January.

If they test positive, they should self-isolate and [order a PCR test](#) to confirm the result. If the PCR is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days. If the PCR test is negative, they no longer need to self-isolate but should continue to carry out the remainder of the daily tests, and only need to isolate if it is positive’.

We recognise that this is a new position and that you will require additional LFD tests to do this. We are awaiting further deliveries of lateral flow tests and hope to be able to issue these ahead of the Christmas break.

In addition to this issue, we are continuing to experience staffing difficulties mainly due to staff dependants being ill or sent home from primary settings to isolate. There is the added complication that supply teachers are choosing to finish earlier for Christmas to reduce their chance of infection over the holiday, or are unavailable to work due to illness themselves. I indicated to you in my letter in November that it may become necessary to ask some year groups to work at home. **I am afraid that we are at the point where we do not have enough staff in school to safely keep all year groups in the building.**

On Wednesday 15th December it is necessary for us to ask that year 9 students work at home. Work will be set for students via SMHW so please check this carefully.

On Thursday 16th December year 8 will be working from home. We have selected these year groups to reduce impact on families with childcare as most children of this age are able to be at home without disrupting work patterns for their parents/carers. The staff who would be teaching these groups will be redirected to other classes of children in school, so we will be unable to deliver live lessons.

We are trying to reduce the impact on examination year groups and to ensure that we do not affect one year group more than another in KS3. I am sure that you will understand that we are also trying to support year 7 students who are still in a transition period from primary school.

School finishes at 12.10pm on Friday 17th December for students. We hope to be able to have all students in on Friday so that they can wish their friends and teachers well for Christmas and collect work/books or anything that they might need over the break. We will update you on this by the end of the day on Wednesday 15th December.

I can only apologise for these measures and the need to introduce them. It is important that we maintain a safe working environment for students and this can only be done if we have enough staff on site. As a parent myself, I understand first hand the disruption these measures cause for families. Please know that we would not do this unless it was absolutely necessary for the safety of the students here.

We are grateful to you all for your support and patience in these exceptionally difficult times.

Kind regards,



Ms N Mason
Head of School