

6 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carers

RE: COVID-19 Update for January 2022 Return

A Happy New Year to all our families. Yesterday we started carrying out Lateral Flow Tests in preparation for KS4 and KS5 students returning to school full-time today and KS3 students returning to school full-time on Friday 7 January. As students return to school I wanted to confirm the latest government and TKAT guidance that we will be following.

On Sunday 2 January the government confirmed that face coverings should also be worn by students in classrooms. This is in addition to the existing guidance that sets out that students should wear a face covering whilst moving around the building. The government has confirmed that the advice on face coverings in classrooms will be in place until Wednesday 26 January, where Plan B regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point current measures will be reviewed.

Please can I ask for parent/carers' support in ensuring that your child has a suitable face covering for them to wear each day. It is also not sufficient for your child to just say they are exempt from wearing a face covering. We have exemption cards and badges that we can give to students following communication with home. Please note that exemption applies to students who fulfil an official exemption criteria only - it is not possible for us to work with personal choice. Generally students are very good at putting on a face covering when asked but our expectation is that students should not need reminding to wear a face covering. Please can you also explain to your child why this is important. Before the Christmas break we had high numbers of cases of COVID-19 which had a significant impact on the school. Every child has a role to play making sure they are taking appropriate precautions to keep themselves and others safe. The risk of infection remains very high; to illustrate this point, we have already had 5 positive Lateral Flow Test results from the in-school testing and we have been informed of 38 students that have COVID-19 and are having to self-isolate instead of returning to school.

A number of parent/carers have been in touch with the school to confirm the length of isolation. The recently publicised 7-day isolation for the general public includes a number of steps that an individual should take in order to reduce risk, for example working from home instead of returning to the place of work, which obviously does not apply to our context. The Trust has sought advice on this and the current position for TKAT schools is that if your child tests positive, their self-isolation period includes the day their symptoms started (or the day they had the test, if they do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

This is because the guidance [How long to self-isolate - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS](#) states that when self-isolation is stopped early after 7 days, contact needs to be limited with people at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Pupils who are considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk and therefore at risk of serious illness are now required to be in school. As I am sure you understand, pupils returning after 7 days, when they are still potentially infectious, put these vulnerable pupils at an unacceptable risk.

The Department for Education has also confirmed that confirmatory PCR tests following a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test result are to be temporarily suspended from Tuesday 11 January. This will mean that if your child receives a positive LFD test result they will be required to self-isolate immediately and will not be required to take a confirmatory PCR test.

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Building Successful Futures

I would really like to thank you for the support you offered us when we had to make difficult decisions before Christmas about having some year groups working on-line, at home due to staffing difficulties. We, like you know the best way for students to learn and make progress is in school and that will always be our priority. However, the current rate of infection and current government guidance on isolation and responding to track and trace contact means that it is highly likely we will see further disruption over the coming weeks. We will continue to work closely with the DFE, Public Health and will also continue to look at every way possible to minimise the impact on students and their learning. It is a reality however and we cannot guarantee that those difficulties are behind us therefore we may need to make alternative arrangements at short notice. We will of course communicate with you in the usual ways at the earliest opportunity if this is ever the case.

Finally, on **Wednesday 12 January** Welling School has its second Vaccination Day for all students aged 12 to 15 years old who received their first COVID-19 injection on Thursday 14 October. This vaccination will be carried out by a separate health care team and the school will continue to operate as normal. This opportunity is only for students who received their first injection on Thursday 14 October. If your child is not eligible to receive their second vaccination on Wednesday 12 January and they are aged 12 or over, you are able to book a vaccination through the [NHS booking system](#). A member of the health care team is visiting the school on Friday and following this visit we will share further information with parent/carers.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully



Mr R Pett
Headteacher