



29 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: General update

I am writing to provide with an update on what has so far been a very busy and productive term and update you on recent notifications from the Department for Education and adjustments we are making in response.

So far, it has been a very busy and productive term with:

All year groups settling back into routines, many of which have been new to our Year 7 and Year 8 children and unfamiliar to all other year groups. Having year groups based in Faculty areas is making pastoral programmes more effective in supporting with individual concerns and whole year group matters.

Year 11 Progress Exams successfully completed before the half-term break; we were impressed with the conduct of all pupils in Year 11 who have not previously sat assessments under examination conditions. It remains a very challenging time and it is understandable that Year 11 feel pressure of such assessments having had their learning impacted by COVID-19, lockdowns and repeated periods of self-isolation. They should be very proud of themselves as their resilience to such challenges has been admirable.

COVID-19 Vaccination programme completed before half-term with approximately three-hundred and fifty pupils. In addition, we are aware many who are sixteen years of age and over, had their vaccination at other centres. Further vaccinations are taking place today.

Flu Vaccination programme which had some disruption on day one with vaccines not being available other than the nasal vaccine but over the two days, approximately seven hundred and sixty-five pupils received their flu vaccination.

School Improvement - external review of Science completed by an Ofsted trained education consultant on Thursday 4 and Friday 5 November 2021. The review looked at the quality of teaching and learning linked directly to the curriculum intent, implementation and impact within science. Further external reviews are planned to support our school improvement programme as we develop a range of strategies linked to our Recovery Plan.

Governors' Quality Assurance Week took place week commencing 8 November 2021 with a focus on Leadership and Management. Seven school Governors completed eighteen reviews with pastoral leaders, faculty leaders, behaviour and SEND leaders as well as look at provision across different year groups. This regular termly programme ensures our school Governors have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school.

COVID-19 updates

Almost two years on and I find myself having to provide parents/carers with updates on the impact of COVID-19 on school and our children. Since the start of term and following the mass testing in our Asymptomatic Testing Site we have monitored the reported cases following positive tests using Lateral Flow Devices. We have remained within the parameters set within the guidance although we have seen an increase in the number of positive cases over the last two weeks. It is still vitally important that we continue with safety measures and be aware of the potential of transmission.



As you will be aware, the Department for Education (DfE) published a notification to schools/academies on Sunday 28 November 2021 in response to the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The first measure is a return to wearing face coverings in school, in all communal areas. Given the short notice I am delighted that nearly all pupils, apart from those who are exempt, arrived at school this morning wearing a face covering. The expectation is to wear a face covering when not in a classroom or learning space or whilst sat in the dining area or outside. Pupils can wear a face covering whilst in the classroom if they wish to do so. I would encourage all our children to have their own face covering rather than rely on a disposable face mask from school.

Assemblies

Due to the potential for the spread of COVID-19 at the start of term, we suspended school assemblies for large gatherings in the main hall, although we have had assemblies online. Due to the low rate of infection we experienced, and given the vaccination roll out, we reinstated assemblies as a large gathering in the main hall, by year group, after the October half-term break. However, due to the recent notification in response to the Omicron variant, we are once again suspending assemblies as large gatherings, but they will continue online.

We are currently reviewing all other events planned for the remainder of this term and will notify you and our children of any changes.

The recent update from the DfE reinforces the process of contact tracing and includes additional guidance in response to the Omicron variant:

Contact tracing and isolation

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 and told to isolate.

The guidance from the DfE states:

Anyone with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) or a positive test result should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should arrange to have a PCR test as soon as possible. This still applies even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, you should stay at home and self-isolate. If you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years and 6 months [you are not required to self-isolate if you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19](#).

You could be fined if you do not self-isolate following a notification by NHS Test and Trace^{[footnote 11](#)}. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the [NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#) if you are required to stay at home and self-isolate or you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate.

As part of the response to COVID-19, schools are expected to complete a single Lateral Flow Device test at the start of term in January 2022. I will write again this week with further information and details about consent.

Finally, **Examinations summer 2022** - Ofqual recently published new guidance on assessments and examinations 2022. I will be writing to the parents and carers of children in Years 11 and 13 with the outline of the details in the DfE and Ofqual contingency planning.

As always, I wish to end by thanking you for your continued support and to say that I am proud of our children and all that they get involved in, give their support for, and achieve.

Yours sincerely



Ian Morrel
Headteacher