

2 January 2022

Dear Parents & Carers

Start of the new term

Happy New Year to everyone - I hope that the Christmas break was a good one for you all.

As we prepare to return to school this week, I would like to remind you of the arrangements for Covid-19 testing and also update you on developments that have been announced in the news this morning. Apologies for the length of this letter but I want to be very clear on routines and expectations for everyone.

Face coverings

The Government has announced today that all students, unless medically exempt, must be worn at all times whilst inside until at least 26 January. This includes:

- In classrooms during lesson times. This includes assemblies.
- Whilst on school transport (buses and taxis)
- Whilst in communal areas (corridors, lunch queue and the Study Centre at Athena. If it is raining outside and students use inside spaces at social times whilst not eating, face coverings must be worn. If it is not raining, students are encouraged to remain outside in the fresh air)

Please ensure that your child has a ready supply of face coverings, at least three each day to account for breakages or loss. We will have a few spare face coverings but this supply is very limited.

Staggered return days

To enable safe on site testing, we will be staggering the return of students as follows:

- Tuesday 4 January: Year 7, 11, 12 and 13
- Wednesday 5 January: Year 10
- Thursday 6 January: Year 8
- Friday 7 January: Year 9

Once students are in school, they will remain in school eg. Year 7 will attend Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; Year 8 will only attend Thursday and Friday.

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For students not in school, teachers will set work via Teams for the lessons students would normally have on each day. Unless teachers have contacted their groups directly, these lessons will not be “live” but it is important that all of the work is completed and submitted as directed by the teacher.

Testing at home

Prior to returning, it is important that all students complete at least one lateral flow test at home. This should be on the evening before their first day according to the timetable above. Additional tests prior to this and on the morning of their first day can also be completed if you have sufficient tests at home.

All students are encouraged to participate in regular testing for Covid-19 at home using the kits provided by the school. This should be every Sunday and Wednesday evening and all results, positive and negative, should be reported to the school via TestRegister and to the NHS Test and Trace service. Links can be found on our [website](#).

We are expecting a delivery of lateral flow tests within the first week back and will distribute these to students as soon as we are able.

New information from the Government today states: "Even if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, they are strongly encouraged to take part in LFD testing [in school and] at home once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection"

Testing in school

All students will be offered *one lateral flow test for Covid-19 in school* as they return next week. This will be during the morning of their first day back in school according to the timetable above and in addition to the test completed at home.

Students will be self-administering the test with guidance from school staff and parent volunteers.

If the test result is negative, students will remain in school. If the test is positive, students will be isolated immediately and parents/carers will be called to collect their child and arrange a PCR test to confirm the result. Students must self-isolate in line with national guidance until the result of the PCR test is known.

Positive cases of Covid-19

Positive lateral flow test results need to be confirmed by a PCR that should be arranged immediately once the LFT result is known.

Students should self-isolate immediately following a positive result. The NHS Test and Trace service will advise the duration and dates for isolation following the PCR result. This is likely to be *seven days* provided lateral flow tests on days six and seven are both negative with a return to school on day eight. If students are not able to take a lateral flow test on days six and seven, the full ten day isolation period will be expected.

Please continue to report all results to the school absence team (including NHS confirmation of any positive result) and NHS Test and Trace service.

Close contacts of positive cases of Covid-19 will continue to be identified by the Test and Trace team and if fully vaccinated or under the age of 18 years and 6 months will be advised to take daily lateral flow tests for seven days. This should include all household contacts (eg. if a parent tests positive, children in the household should complete daily lateral flow tests).

Symptoms of Covid-19

If students display any of the symptoms of Covid-19, they must self-isolate immediately and arrange for a PCR test. Lateral flow tests are not sufficient in these instances. The symptoms are:

- New, persistent cough
- High temperature
- Loss of taste or smell

Steps to reduce transmission of Covid-19

Students should continue to wash or sanitise their hands regularly throughout the day. Sanitiser stations are in every room but it is helpful if students have their own supply.

Classrooms will continue to be well-ventilated during the day. This means windows and doors will either remain open or be opened periodically. It is important that students wear layers of clothes *underneath their school uniform* to remain warm. Non-uniform jumpers and coats are not allowed to be worn inside classrooms.

Students will be asked to wipe down desks and chairs at the end of each lesson.

Vaccines

The JCVI have advised that:

- All 12-15 year olds who have not yet been vaccinated, can do so through the national booking service. There are no plans for the SAIS to return to schools to offer first doses at present
- All 12-15 year olds should receive a second vaccine dose through the SAIS. We will let parents/carers know the date(s) for this once known
- All 16-17 year olds should be offered the boosters. Details will be shared via the Government. This will not be a school-based programme and will require young people to visit a vaccination centre
- Any 12-15 year old in a clinical risk group should be offered the booster vaccine. Details will be shared via the Government. This will not be a school-based programme and will require young people to visit a vaccination centre

January exams for vocational subjects

Some students have *real* exams over the next few weeks that *will* contribute to the final grade. These *will* be going ahead so it is vital that students continue to prepare fully for them according to advice issues by subject teachers before the Christmas break. For additional information or guidance, please contact your child's teacher or Head of Year.

Summer exams for Year 11 and 13

As far as we know, the summer exams *will* be going ahead as planned with the adjustments announced last term in place. Following the mock exams in November, teachers and leaders have been working on plans to prepare students for the summer exams to include in-lesson teaching, revision and exam technique sessions; period 7 booster sessions; bespoke interventions based on individual need. I would encourage you and your child(ren) to engage with the support on offer to maximise the chance of success in the exams. *Every* student should be completing *at least two hours* of *independent work* outside of school *every day*.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Eastwood'.

Mark Eastwood

Head of School