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Monday 29 November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope and trust that you and your family are well.

We are writing to update you about the COVID-19 cases in school, further to the latest risk assessment we have carried out last week with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and further to the [Prime Minister's statement on Saturday 27 November](#), where he confirmed new temporary and precautionary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant in the UK.

COVID-19 cases in the College

As of writing we have 14 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the College, amongst students and staff. A further 10 students and staff are awaiting the results of PCR tests after testing positive through their asymptomatic LFD tests. As always, we offer the staff, students and families affected our warmest wishes and unequivocal support. We also want to reassure you that all students and staff who test positive, or who have symptoms, are isolating, and we continue to remain open. Providing your child remains well, they can of course continue to attend school.

This is the lowest number of cases in the College for ten weeks, since 23 September, and reflects a progressive fall in cases since we wrote to you on [21 October](#). This has been an extremely challenging period for all of us, our students, their families, and our staff, but we remain vigilant and committed to assuring the safety of everyone, at the same time as minimising disruption to our students' learning. The fact that we have assumed responsibility for contact tracing, along with the support of families and students, has undoubtedly helped the reduction in transmission. Moreover, the diligent implementation from all of us of the other measures we have invoked — as reiterated in our [letter of 21 October](#), including increased testing — is aiding the reduction in transmission. Many of our 12- to 15-year-old students have also now been vaccinated, of course, as kindly facilitated by Okehampton Medical Centre in recent weeks.

Monitoring and mitigating against virus transmission

We continue to monitor the situation very closely and work alongside public health experts from the UKHSA and the South West Health Protection Team. Given the relatively high number of cases in the community, and in neighbouring communities including [Torridge](#) and [North Devon](#) (the two highest and still rising 7-day case rates in the country), UKHSA have advised that we maintain the key measures and actions we are already taking, with some slight amendments. (The measures already in place at the College incorporate the new temporary measures announced by the Prime Minister on Saturday 27 November, [as they apply to schools](#).) We outline for your information a summary of these slightly amended measures at the end of this communication and would be grateful if you could please reinforce their importance with your child.

COVID-19 vaccines

Parents, carers and guardians of students in years 7 to 11 will have received an email on Friday 26 November from the School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for our 12- to 15-year-old students that will be provided on-site at the College on Friday 3 December 2021. These vaccinations are of course only for those students who have not yet been vaccinated.

If you wish for your child to receive a vaccination on-site on Friday 3 December, and have not previously consented for such, please do ensure that you provide consent as outlined in the SAIS email via:

<https://schoolimms.virginicare.co.uk/covid/2021/devon>.

Thank you very much, again, for your ongoing support and cooperation. Please do remember to continue to report LFD test results to us via [this form](#), and inform us of details regarding any PCR positive case via [this form](#). And of course, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any concerns and/or require any further information, clarification, advice, or support.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Craig Griffiths and Rebecca Mullins. The signature of Craig Griffiths is on the left, followed by a period, and the signature of Rebecca Mullins is on the right.

Craig Griffiths and Rebecca Mullins
(Associate Principals).

Key Actions to mitigate against coronavirus transmission

- All students and staff must wear face coverings in communal areas, unless exempt.
- All students must adhere to the one-way system of movement within corridors.
- If travel to College is by coach or taxi, students should clean hands before boarding, wear face coverings, and should sit next to other students in their year, or siblings.
- Meetings will be undertaken remotely or in well-ventilated spaces with assured social distancing.
- Educational visits will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with any event that is given the go-ahead requiring participants to take a LFD test the day before.
- All students and staff to take LFD tests at home twice a week.
 - ⇒ Please report results, whether positive or negative, to us via [this form](#).
 - ⇒ If the LFD test is positive, the person should isolate and a PCR test should be [arranged](#) and taken within 2 days ⇒ If the PCR test is positive, or if a PCR test is not taken within 2 days of the LFD test, the person must isolate for 10 days (day 1 is the day after the positive LFD test). If the PCR test is taken within 2 days and is negative, the person can return to school.
- If a student or adult in the school believes they are a contact of someone who has tested positive, they should arrange and take a PCR test. (See the notes below.)
- If a student tests positive via a PCR test, we will inform possible contacts to advise them that they should arrange and take a PCR test. (See the notes below.)
 - ⇒ Parent/carers [complete this form](#) to confirm that their child has tested positive via a PCR test and to identify any person with whom their child may have mixed closely.
 - ⇒ We will then contact (by email) the families of any student identified through this form as a possible contact and advise them accordingly.
- Close contacts of suspected or confirmed Omicron cases, must isolate for 10 days regardless of their vaccination status. (We are of course unable to identify the variant through our contact tracing; any such contacts will be informed by NHS Test and Trace.)
- Any student or adult in the school who is a contact of someone who has tested positive and has taken a PCR test that returns a negative result, should take a LFD test daily for 7 days.
 - ⇒ This includes any student or adult who believes they are a contact of someone who has tested positive, or any student or adult whom we have contacted to advise that they are.
- Indoor occupied spaces will be kept well ventilated, with CO₂ monitors installed in classrooms to identify if ventilation needs to be improved.

• Notes

A student who believes they are a contact of a positive case, or who has been identified by the school or NHS Test & Trace as a possible contact of a positive case, can still attend school while they await the results of their PCR test — unless the variant is the Omicron variant, when the student must isolate for 10 days.

Anyone who has already tested positive for COVID-19 should not undertake any test within 90 days of their positive test unless they exhibit any new coronavirus symptoms.