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Friday 25 February 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family are well and are enjoying a peaceful half term break.

I write further to the Prime Minister's [statement to parliament](#) on [living with COVID](#) on Monday, and to his [press conference statement](#) also made on Monday. As you are no doubt aware, the Prime Minister stated that 'while the pandemic is not over... all remaining domestic restrictions in law' have been removed today, 24 February. (It should be noted also that Local authority powers to tackle local COVID-19 outbreaks have also been removed from today.) However, whilst all legal restrictions have been removed, the [Prime Minister has 'encouraged'](#) the public 'to continue to follow public health advice, as with all infectious diseases such as the flu, to minimise the chance of catching Covid and help protect family and friends.'

I understand that there may be some uncertainty and possibly anxiety around the changes, and there is no doubt that practically reconciling the distinction that now exists between public health *advice* and the removal of the legal requirement to follow such may cause some initial confusion. I endeavour therefore through this letter to provide you with as much clarity as I can, and to reassure you that we will continue to follow all guidance from HM Government, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Directors of public health to ensure all decisions are made in the best interests of our students and staff.

The Department for Education (DfE) have provided a helpful summary on '[What the latest advice on testing and self-isolation means for education settings](#)'. The UKHSA have also yesterday published their updated [guidance for people with COVID-19 and their contacts](#), which schools will follow. For your convenience, however, I summarise the key changes as they will apply for our students on return to school next week.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19

- Whilst is no longer law for a person to self-isolate if they test positive, the public health [advice](#) for anyone who tests positive remains to stay at home, and therefore not attend school: 'They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting... as long as they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature.' (This advice will be updated on 1 April, when people who test positive for COVID-19 will be 'encouraged... to exercise personal responsibility'.)
- Given that contact tracing has now ended, UKHSA [guidance](#) also states that if possible, a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 should let people they have been in close contact with know about their positive test result so that they can follow the [guidance](#).

If your child has coronavirus symptoms

- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms, the public health advice remains for a PCR test to be arranged and for them to stay at home while awaiting the result. Tests can be ordered [here](#). (This advice will be updated on 1 April, when people who have symptoms will be ‘encouraged... to exercise personal responsibility’.)

If your child is a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

- Routine contact tracing has ended, and students (and fully vaccinated adults) are no longer required to test daily for 7 days if they are a close contact of a person testing positive for COVID-19, and should attend school as usual. In addition, adults who are not fully vaccinated are no longer required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of a person testing positive for COVID-19, meaning that staff so affected should attend school as usual.
- Aspects of the [guidance](#) for students who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, as they apply to school, is that they should:
 - ⇒ ‘Avoid contact with anyone they know who is at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19.’
 - ⇒ ‘Limit close contact with other people outside their household, especially in crowded, enclosed, or poorly ventilated spaces.’
 - ⇒ ‘Wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people.’ This will include classrooms and corridors in College.

Testing for COVID-19

- Students are no longer required to take two weekly LFD tests, although they may continue to do so if they wish. Please note that from 1 April ‘free symptomatic [i.e., PCR] and asymptomatic [i.e., LFD] testing for the general public’ will end. Tests can be ordered [here](#).

Use of face coverings

- Students, staff and visitors are no longer required to wear face coverings in classrooms or communal areas, unless they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (see the point that follows). However, given the current case numbers locally, we strongly advise that students, staff, and visitors continue to wear face coverings, temporarily, in corridors and communal areas, and will retain the option for students and staff to continue to wear face coverings in classrooms should they wish to do so.
- To be clear, as per the UKHSA’s [guidance](#) published yesterday, we require any student or member of staff who is a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to wear a face covering (unless exempt) in classrooms, corridors and communal areas indoors for 10 days from the date of their last contact. This will be difficult for us to track and manage, so we ask for your support in helping us ensure that our students act responsibly and follow this advice.

- HM Government advice continues to be that face coverings are worn 'in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not normally meet'. To this end, if travel to college is by coach or taxi, students should continue to wear face coverings until further notice (and should sit next to other students in their year, or siblings).

Visitors to the College

- Whilst visitors are no longer required to show a negative LFD result before visiting the College, given case numbers locally, we strongly advise visitors to take an LFD test before visiting.


Maintaining safety and outbreak contingencies

- We will continue to retain some of the measures we have had in place at the academy to help limit transmission of the virus within our school and the wider community, including encouraging vaccination uptake, ensuring that classrooms and communal areas have sufficient ventilation, and that there continues to be regular enhanced hygiene and cleaning processes in place. We will also maintain the one-way system of movement within corridors, and separate venues for each key stage for break and lunch times.
- We have recently shared with families a communication from the School Age Immunisation Team regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for 12–15-year-olds and have confirmed on-site administration of 2nd doses (and 1st doses if not already received) to take place on 23 and 24 March.
- It may be the case that some measures need to be temporarily reinstated depending on College or community circumstances in the future, and we would ask for your cooperation again should such a need arise. Directors of public health may, for example, recommend the reintroduction of asymptomatic testing with LFD tests, and/or that face coverings should temporarily be worn again in communal areas and/or classrooms. Should this ever occur, we will of course communicate actions with families as quickly as possible.

We very much recognise and appreciate the support and cooperation that everyone has shown in response to the range of safety measures we have implemented at the College over the last two years, all of which have been in line with HM Government and Public Health guidance. It has helped us to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff, and community, whilst limiting disruption to learning as much as possible. Whilst we sincerely hope that we can continue to operate with minimal restrictions and minimal or no disruption to learning as we move forward, I want to reassure you that we will continue to work with the UKHSA and Directors of public health to keep the health and safety of our students and their families, our staff, and the community we serve, paramount.

May I thank you sincerely once again for your continued support. As always, if you have any questions or would like to discuss any matter outlined in this letter further, please do not hesitate to contact us; we will endeavour to respond as quickly as we can.

Yours Sincerely,



Craig Griffiths (Principal).