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Thursday 31 March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write, further to my [letter of 25 February](#), and my recent letters of this and last week, to update you on the coronavirus situation at the College, and also to update you about the changes to HM Government advice that come into effect from tomorrow 1 April.

Current situation in the College

Thank you very much again for your support over this week and last. For your information, we have had between 30 and 35 members of staff absent and isolating because of COVID-19 each day over the duration, and simply would not have been able to ensure operationally safe provision for our students on site without having a year group receive remote education at home.

Unfortunately, despite being hopeful yesterday that staff absence would improve to the extent that I would be able to cease the restrictions to on-site attendance, the numbers of staff we know are absent tomorrow and isolating because of COVID-19, remains too high to ensure operationally safe provision for our students on site. As such I have sadly had to take the decision to close the College for our Y7 students again tomorrow, 1 April, and to provide them with remote learning instead. I understand that this may cause some inconvenience for parents and students, but I want to assure you that this course of action is an absolute last resort, and is unavoidable on the grounds of health and safety. I cannot express enough how much I did not want to take this decision, but again, I sincerely hope you understand why I have had to.

To confirm, the following plan will be in place:

- Y7 students stay at home Friday 1 April.
- Y7 students will receive Remote Learning in the usual way via Class Charts.
- This Remote Learning will follow students' timetables.
- Y7 students will return to College on Monday 4 April.
- Students in all other year groups attend school as normal.

Given the changes being made by HM Government from tomorrow (see overleaf), and given the information we currently have, I am optimistic that I will be able to cease these restrictions to attendance from Monday 4 April. I will continue to monitor the information we have daily, carefully, throughout the weekend, and will be in a better position on Sunday to evaluate the situation for Monday. If, in the worst-case scenario, staff absence is such that I will again have to ask a year group to remain at home and receive remote learning, I will be asking Y8 students, and I will contact you again on Sunday to confirm.

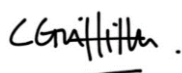
National Arrangements for 'Living with COVID' from 1 April

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) [released this information this week](#) on the 'next steps for living with COVID'. The Department for Education also [published this blog](#) yesterday to clarify how 'living with COVID' will apply to schools, in preparation for all relevant guidance to be published on 1 April, or indeed, simply removed. Should there be any significant and material differences in the updated guidance, I will write again to outline them for you. The key points and changes that will come into effect from tomorrow are:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) tests are no longer be freely available, including to schools, and routine testing will no longer be expected in schools. (The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) have provided new information [here](#) on who can access free tests from now on.)
- Adults with a positive COVID-19 test result are now advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days. This of course applies to College staff.
- School students with a positive COVID-19 test result are now advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 3 days. This means that all students currently isolating can return to school on Monday 4 April, if of course they do not have a high temperature and are well enough to attend.
- Adults with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19, and a high temperature or who feel unwell, are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they feel well enough to resume normal activities and they no longer have a high temperature.
- Children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, where they can. They can return to school when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend.
- It is deemed 'sensible' to wear a mask in enclosed spaces, keep indoor spaces ventilated and stay away from others if you have any symptoms of a respiratory illness, including COVID.
- Children and young people aged 5 and over are encouraged to get vaccinated, although the in-school COVID-19 vaccination programme will come to an end.

I am sincerely sorry that I have had to restrict the attendance of one of our year groups again, but I hope and trust that you understand why I have done so. The health and safety of our students and staff continues to be paramount, and we will continue to maintain our enhanced control measures to mitigate the transmission of the virus on site, as outlined in my [letter of 20 March](#), and will continue to monitor the situation in the College carefully. I will contact you again to confirm arrangements moving forward. Thank you very much once again for your ongoing support. Should you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With my warmest wishes,



Craig Griffiths (Principal).