



Mill Road • Okehampton
Devon • EX20 1PW



admin@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk
www.okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk
@OkehamptonCollege
@OkehamptonCC



+44 (0)1837 650910

Thursday 2 September

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope and trust that you are well and that you have enjoyed (and are still enjoying) a peaceful, refreshing summer break with your family.

We write further to our letters of [9 July 2021](#) and [23 July 2021](#), and our email communication of 25 August, to share some important information that we hope you will find helpful and reassuring in terms of how we are planning for the safe return to school of our students and staff. We are very much looking forward to welcoming our brilliant students, both old and new, back to school next week, and to getting them back into the exhilarating groove of learning. We are excited about the new academic year and the opportunities and challenges that the energy of any new year brings — after the events of the last 18 months this could never be more important.

Given the concerns many have regarding coronavirus transmission we wanted to write to you ahead of the September start to reassure you that ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff remains paramount, as has been the case throughout the pandemic, and as always will be. With this in mind, we will be retaining some key preventative measures to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission within school, whilst ensuring that our students are able to learn and make progress, with genuine fulfilment and minimal disruption. We believe it is our civic duty to ensure that our staff, students, their families, and the community we proudly serve stay safe, and accept such a duty with a profound sense of responsibility.

We outline overleaf a summary of the key information we are sharing with you, before providing you with the detail from page 3 onwards for your reference. If you are reading this electronically, clicking or tapping on the respective section outlined below will take you directly to the detailed information. For your convenience, we have also provided some links in the document to take you direct to other sources of information or resources, should you wish to access them.

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Phased return to school and asymptomatic testing arrangements: On their return students will take two lateral flow device (LFD) tests in school, 3-5 days apart. To ensure that testing runs smoothly we are phasing the return to school for students, in line with DfE and NHS Test and Trace guidance. Students should then continue to test twice weekly at home, with their results being reported to us. If you have not already provided [consent](#) for your child(ren) to be tested, please do so by 23:45 on Saturday 4 September. For more detail, including the precise schedule, please see the [information provided on pages 3-4](#).

Attendance expectations: Whilst we understand the difficulties that everyone is facing, attendance at school is very important and is crucial to learning and achievement. Your support over the last 18 months has been significant in helping us to keep disruption to learning at a minimum when compared with other schools. We thank you for this and for your continued support in this regard. For the precise detail, please see the [information provided on pages 4-5](#).

Updated Coronavirus Risk Assessment and Outbreak Management Plan: Our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Risk Assessment](#) and our [Outbreak Management Plan](#) have been fully updated. This provides you with detail about actions if there is a low risk of coronavirus transmission; if staff or students have coronavirus symptoms; if a student or member of staff tests positive for COVID-19; if there is a relatively high or sustained increased risk of coronavirus transmission; and if there is a relatively high and enduring risk of coronavirus transmission. For more detail, please see the [information provided on pages 5-6](#).

Baseline organisational and structural controls: These are the measures and controls we are retaining to continue to mitigate the risk of coronavirus transmission within school. They include ensuring good hygiene for everyone; enhanced cleaning regimes; keeping occupied spaces well ventilated; following public health advice; the voluntary wearing of face coverings; separate entrances for KS3, KS4 and KS5 students; one-way system in corridors; common layouts for all classrooms and strict seating plans; and split-service at lunch times. For more detail, please see the [information provided on pages 6-7](#).

Contingency measures to be implemented in response to the increase in cases locally: on Friday 27 August, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) confirmed that additional support will be deployed to local authorities in the South West of England in response to growing COVID-19 cases in the region. As such on return to school, as part of the additional contingency measures we will invoke, all students, staff, and visitors should wear face coverings (unless exempt) in communal areas outside classrooms, until 1 October when the recommendation will be reviewed. For more detail, please see the [information provided on pages 7-8](#).

We thank you again in anticipation of your continued support, with which we are very hopeful that everyone — students, parents and carers, and staff — will thrive in the exciting year ahead of us. (It is also worth mentioning here that we will soon be creating a new parent forum, which we will write to you about in due course, and which we hope you will want to be involved with.) As ever, please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information or clarification. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours sincerely,



Craig Griffiths and Rebecca Mullins
(Associate Principals).

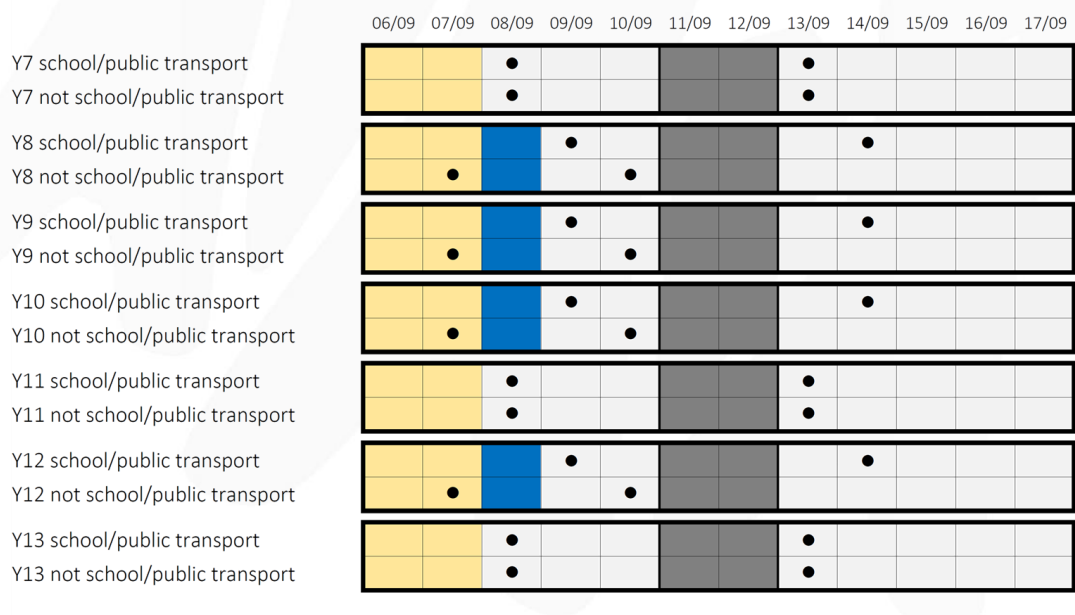
Phased return to school and asymptomatic testing arrangements in detail

As you know, and as we outlined in detail in our letter of [23 July 2021](#), on their return to school students will take two LFD tests at our reinstated on-site Asymptomatic Testing Site, 3-5 days apart, according to the schedule provided, which we reproduce below for your convenience. Students should then continue to test twice weekly at home with results reported to us via this [short online form](#).

May we also remind you here that we require consent to be provided for any student who has not previously had consent given to participate in the testing. To this end, if you have not yet done so, [please complete this online consent form](#) (we have extended the deadline to 23:45 on Saturday 4 September 2021) to indicate whether you give consent for your child to participate in testing, or not. Detail regarding the testing programme was provided in our letter of [23 July](#), along with information about the tests used and terms of consent.

To facilitate the first of the two on-site asymptomatic tests of all our students and welcome everyone back to school safely, and to ensure that the return is as disruption free for families and students as we can make it (within the logistical constraints outside of our control, such as school transport), we will be phasing the return to school for students as per DfE and NHS Test and Trace expectations, as outlined below:

Phased Return and Asymptomatic Testing Arrangements wb 06/09/2021



- Staff training day. Students only attend for their scheduled COVID-19 'Orient gene' LFD test on-site.
- Students do not attend school and receive remote home learning.
- Students attend school as normal.
- Students have COVID-19 'Orient gene' LFD test on-site.

- **Testing Group 1: Students in years 8, 9, 10 and 12 who do not use school or public transport (including public buses 6S and 75A)** will have their first on-site LFD test before the start of term, on Tuesday 7 September, and parents/carers must book an appointment slot via our online Parents' Evening booking system through this link: <https://okehampton.schoolcloud.co.uk/>. Once you have logged in you will be able to select an available, convenient time slot for your child(ren) to attend for their first LFD test. Please note that by making a booking you are giving consent for us to test your child, if you have not already done so. Students will only attend for their test, at the appointment time booked, and will be dismissed to return home once they have taken their test. Families will be notified of a positive result. All students in years 8, 9, 10 and 12 will receive remote education on Wednesday 8 September, and return to school on Thursday 9 September.
- **Testing Group 2: All students in years 7, 11 and 13** will return to school as normal as planned on Wednesday 8 September and will have their first on-site LFD test during the school day.
- **Testing Group 3: Students in years 8, 9, 10 and 12 who use school or public transport (including public buses 6S and 75A)** will have their first on-site LFD test during the school day on Thursday 9 September.
- All students will be called from lessons for their second on-site test as illustrated in the diagram on the previous page. After this, students should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this requirement will be reviewed by HM Government.
- Students will be 'allowed to resume face to face learning if they test negative' after their first LFD test. If a student's LFD test result on-site is positive, they will be isolated in school immediately and collected by a member of their family or household to isolate at home, in line with current [guidance](#). A standard lab-based Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test must then be [arranged](#) and taken to confirm the result. (Whilst awaiting PCR results, a student should continue isolating.) If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive LFD test, and is negative, it overrides the LFD test and the student can return to school, as long as the student doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms. If the PCR test is positive, the student must isolate for the required period, i.e., for 10 days from the date of the test. NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case — or in the case of children — the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts.
- Any student with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 must not attend school, and must isolate at home and [arrange a PCR test](#).

Attendance expectations in detail

The pandemic and the disruption it has caused over the last 18 months has served to remind us just how important strong attendance to school is. Indeed, thanks to the support of students and their families with respect to the implementation of our safety control measures, the College was not as impacted as many other schools in our region and beyond last academic year, meaning that we were able to provide some relative stability of educational routine that students so profoundly need. Relative to schools nationally and regionally, our students' attendance as a result throughout the last academic year has been strong. And we of course aim to maintain this. As such, we summarise overleaf the updated and current information regarding attendance for the academic year 2021 to 2022:

- School attendance is mandatory.
- It is the duty of parents and carers to ensure that their child attends regularly.
- It is the responsibility of the school to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The category of non-attendance because of 'circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' that was introduced by the DfE for the 2020 to 2021 academic year remains for this academic year. If used, this category of non-attendance will not count as an absence for statistical purposes (either authorised or unauthorised), meaning that no parent or carer will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session. Schools are only permitted to use this category where a student does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Specifically:
 - ⇒ A student who has symptoms of coronavirus but has not yet had a positive test.
 - ⇒ A student who has had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test and is getting — or awaiting the results of — a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.
 - ⇒ A student who is required to quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK from overseas.
- As per the new [self-isolation requirements](#), any student required to self-isolate is advised to take a PCR test. If a student tests negative from a PCR test and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If a student tests positive from a PCR test they should [self-isolate as required](#) (i.e., from the day symptoms started, or the day of the test if there were no symptoms, and the next 10 full days) and their absence from school will be authorised as illness.
- If a student does not attend school because of 'circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)', we will provide remote education.
- If you envisage any issues with attendance, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to talk to us in the first instance so that we can support you as best we can.

Updated Coronavirus Risk Assessment and Outbreak Management Plan [in detail](#)

As you know, on 19 July 2021, HM Government proceeded to the [4th and final step out of lockdown](#): 'moving away from stringent restrictions on everyone's day-to-day lives, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk.' For all schools across the country this means a move away from the full set of organisational and structural controls implemented throughout last academic year (as we outlined for you at the time via our [September 2020 Coronavirus Response Plan](#) and associated [Risk Assessment](#)), to a more responsive approach to minimising the risk of coronavirus transmission.

The Department for Education (DfE) have updated their [operational guidance](#) for schools, in line with the wider removal of COVID-19 restrictions across the country, and we have carefully and comprehensively reviewed and updated our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Risk Assessment](#) in response.

Moreover, and importantly, we have reviewed our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan](#) to detail the proportionate, protective measures that we will invoke in response to any recommendations provided by directors of public health, Public Health England (PHE), the South West Health Protection Team (SWHPT), and/or HM Government, to help manage a COVID-19 'outbreak' within the school, or if COVID-19 infection rates in the community are 'extremely high'. Both these documents — and particularly our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan](#) — should provide you with all the information you require, along with links to official sources and guidance, so we do encourage you to consult them. You may also find the [information for parents and carers](#) provided by the DfE a useful source of information.

Our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan 2021-2022](#) details the controls and measures we will take to minimize any further disruption to our students' education whilst ensuring that the safety of our students, their families, our staff, and the community we serve remains paramount. It outlines requirements and actions:

- If there is a relatively low risk of coronavirus transmission (pages 3-4)
- If a student or member of staff has coronavirus symptoms (pages 4-5)
- If a student or member of staff tests positive for COVID-19 (pages 5-6)
- If there is a relatively high or sustained increased risk of coronavirus transmission (pages 6-7)
- If there is a relatively high and enduring risk of coronavirus transmission (pages 7-8)

Baseline Organisational and Structural Controls in detail

So, whilst from September our timetable will no longer be organised around class 'bubbles', whilst breaks and lunches will no longer be staggered throughout the day, whilst Test & Trace will undertake contact tracing rather than the school, and whilst students will not be required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as — or are a close contact of — someone with COVID-19, we will retain a range of controls to continue to mitigate the risk of transmission as outlined in section 1.3 pages 3-4 of our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan 2021-2022](#), and in the 'Summary hierarchy of controls' outlined on p3 of our updated [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Risk Assessment 2021-2022](#).

In summary, these baseline measures and structural controls include:

- Ensuring good hygiene (hand and respiratory) for everyone.
 - ⇒ Students and staff must wash their hands regularly (with hand sanitizer provided), when entering college, when entering a classroom, before entering eating areas, and before using finger scanners in Café 11, the Dining Room, or Wardhayes cafeteria.
 - ⇒ Students and staff must follow the 'Catch it, bin it, kill it' code.
 - ⇒ Unhygienic behaviour remains a significant issue and deliberate acts of transmission, e.g., spitting, will result in clear and consistently applied sanctions, including fixed term exclusions where appropriate.
- Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes.
- Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

- Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19, including asymptomatic testing, both on-site on return to school and twice a week at home thereafter, and isolating if symptomatic or testing positive for COVID-19.
- Maintaining safety protocols on public and school transport:
 - ⇒ 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.
 - ⇒ If travel to college is by public transport, students must wear face coverings and — if seating is restricted — sit only in seats marked as available.
- Permitting the voluntary wearing of face coverings in school.
- Retaining separate entrances for KS3, KS4 and KS5 students, and continuing careful entrance and exit management by senior staff.
- Maintaining the one-way system of movement within corridors.
- Maintaining common layouts for all classrooms, except specialist spaces, with all desks (one desk for two students) arranged in rows and forward facing, with space maximized between them.
 - ⇒ All classrooms (including specialist spaces) will have a strict seating plan. Students must sit in the seat they are allocated, and only that seat. These seating plans will be recorded centrally to support effective and speedy liaison with Test & Trace if required.
- Providing a split-service at lunch times, and at separate venues for students in each key stage.
- Continuing to undertake some events virtually.
- Maintaining vigilance and ensuring that all staff enforce expectations, and routinely seek the cooperation expected of all families.

Contingency measures to be implemented in response to the increase in cases locally in detail

As explicated through our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan 2021-2022](#), we will continue to monitor the situation regarding coronavirus transmission closely, and liaise with directors of public health, PHE, and SWHPT as necessary. To unashamedly reiterate, the safety of the children, families, and community we serve will always be paramount.

To this end, since our email to all families last week, and given that the stepping up of safety measures and reinstatement or introduction of any additional restrictions beyond our ‘baseline’ measures must only be done on the advice of directors of public health, we contacted PHE and SWHPT to discuss the significant recent increase in cases locally and regionally, and the implications for schools. In addition, on Friday 27 August, the [Department for Health and Social Care \(DHSC\) confirmed](#) that additional support will be deployed to local authorities in the South West of England in response to growing COVID-19 cases in the region. Moreover, in responding to the designation of the [South West as an ‘enhanced response area’](#), the Director of Public Health for Devon has emphasised that residents and visitors should ‘take extra caution’.

As such, as per public health recommendations, and in the spirit of ensuring the safety of the children, families, and community we serve, we confirm here that we will invoke temporary additional measures outlined in section 4 pages 6-7 of our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak Management Plan 2021-2022](#). This includes the requirement that **on return to school, all students, staff, and visitors should wear face coverings (unless exempt) in communal areas outside classrooms, where social distancing cannot be maintained**, until 1 October, when DHSC, PHE and Devon's Director of Public Health will review the recommendation.

Vaccine update [in detail](#)

As you may be aware, all young people aged 16 to 17 in England have been offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to give them protection before returning to school. The [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#) advises that all 16 to 17-year-olds should be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine, in addition to the existing offer of 2 doses of vaccine to 16 to 17-year-olds who are in 'at-risk' groups. NHS England has launched a new [online walk-in site finder](#) to help 16- and 17-year-olds locate the nearest available centre. Young people with three months of their 18th birthday and all over-18s can also [book an appointment](#) on the NHS website.

Moreover, as previously advised by JCVI, 'children aged 12 to 15 years with specific underlying health conditions that put them at risk of severe COVID-19, should be offered 2 doses of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine', as well as 'children and young people aged 12 years and over who are household contacts of persons (adults or children) who are immunosuppressed... on the understanding that the main benefits from vaccination are related to the potential for indirect protection of their household contact who is immunosuppressed.'

Please see the [JCVI statement](#) for detail.
