



4th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Video message is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI14F2EYodU>

I hope you and your children have had an enjoyable Christmas holiday, and I wish you all a happy New Year. We are looking forward to welcoming your children back in lessons on Wednesday 5th January after completing their Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) in school today. Any child who tests positive on 4th January should not attend school on 5th January. They will need to take a PCR test within two days if they get a positive lateral flow test. If the PCR test is negative and has no Covid symptoms, they should return to school the day after they get their PCR result.

I am sure that you are all aware that the Government has updated the Covid guidance for schools because of the high rate of transmission of the Omicron variant. I am pleased to say that schools are currently expected to remain open.

Changes

The main change is that students must wear face coverings in lessons and corridors until at least the end of January.

Members of staff will wear face coverings in corridors and in the classroom if they move into the main body of the room to talk to students on a one-to-one basis. While they are teaching from the front of the classroom, they do not need to wear a face covering, but they can choose to do so.

Staff and students who test positive on a PCR test still need to isolate. They should take a lateral flow test on the 6th and 7th days of the isolation. If the lateral flow test is negative on both days, they can return to school on the 8th day.

Close contacts of people who have had a positive PCR test should continue to attend school and take lateral flow tests for seven consecutive days. If a test is positive or has symptoms, they should stay at home, isolate, and get a PCR test within two days. If the PCR test is negative and has no Covid symptoms, they should return to school the day after they get their PCR result.

Public transport

Students who travel to school on a bus or a train should wear a face covering on their journey to and from school.

Informing you about close contacts

Schools are no longer expected to track and trace if a staff member or student tests positive. Instead, that responsibility lies with the NHS track and trace team. However, I want to keep you informed about transmission rates at school and ensure that you know when to move to daily lateral flow tests. Therefore, we will send you a letter when there are four cases or more in a year group and ask the entire year group to take daily lateral flow tests until the numbers have reduced to below four.



Large gatherings

We will not be holding in-person collective worship until the situation improves. All gatherings will be held in form rooms via Teams for the near future.

Students will continue to use their designated areas at their allotted breaktime. In addition, we will continue to keep year groups separate as much as we can during social times.

Students should wear face coverings while queuing for food but do not need to wear them once they have sat down to eat.

Students and staff have been working hard towards their musical performance, which will take place at the end of this half term. We will meet at the end of the first week of term to consider the risks due to Covid-19 and how we can mitigate them. I believe that the opportunity to perform live to an audience is an essential part of school life. Students have been deprived of it for too long. We will try to ensure that this show can go on despite the additional challenges of Covid.

Extracurricular clubs

Unless staff members have already communicated directly with students and parents, there will be no after-school clubs in the first week of the new term. After-school clubs will restart on Monday 10th January. If the club is held inside and has members from more than one year group, we would ask that students take a lateral flow test before school on the morning of their club. If the club is held outside, or if there is only one year group involved, then this is not necessary.

Vaccinations

East Sussex Public Health Team will administer the planned second vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds. Those vaccinations will occur at the Helenswood Campus on 19th January and at the William Parker Campus on 20th January. However, the sooner your children have their second vaccination, the less likely they will contract Covid-19. Therefore, if you can make your own arrangements for your child to have their second vaccination, this would help reduce transmission rates at school. As always, parental consent will be sought before any vaccination, and we recommend that you discuss the decision about whether to vaccinate your children.

Thank you for all the support and appreciation you have shown since the pandemic began. This is not the start of the term that we were hoping for. Still, by working together, we can once again overcome adversity and provide a stable and happy environment in which all community members can thrive and be successful.

Yours faithfully

Mr Liam Collins

Principal