

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

Dear parents and carers

Happy new year. I do hope you have all had a lovely Christmas and that not too many plans were disrupted as a result of COVID. For my part, it's been great to be able to have some family time and I'm now looking forward to seeing everyone back in school tomorrow and throwing ourselves into the new term.

There has been plenty in the press over the past few days about the situation in schools for the coming term (some of it has even been accurate!) and so I am writing to clarify a few details.

Our general approach will continue to be to operate school as normally as possible and to do all we can to ensure students' education in the broadest sense is not disrupted. So, for example, clubs will continue to run and we will not be making any changes to the timetable. We will revert to virtual assemblies for a couple of weeks while we assess the situation and face coverings will be needed in lessons for a while (see below) but, otherwise, students and parents shouldn't really notice anything different to last term.

There has been a lot of talk about the potential for staff absence to cause major disruption in schools and there is certainly the possibility of challenges here – indeed, to an extent, we saw some of it before Christmas with a higher-than-normal proportion of lessons needing cover. However, we are optimistic that it won't affect us too much. Unless they are very unwell, teachers who have to isolate can usually teach lessons to their classes from home and I have to say that Lymm High staff have been very flexible and willing in this respect. We are also lucky that we tend to find it easier than most schools to secure supply staff to supervise students in such cases or to teach cover lessons where teachers are unavailable. There are bound to be some operational challenges along the way and I obviously can't guarantee anything, but I can certainly assure you that we will be working extremely hard to minimise any impact on learning. Many thanks in anticipation of your support and understanding around these kinds of issues.

Otherwise, key points arising from the latest set of government guidance are as follows:

- As originally planned, Years 7–11 will be **back in school tomorrow** (i.e. Tuesday). Sixth Form will still have remote lessons tomorrow and return to school on **Wednesday**.
- The government have said that students will need to wear face coverings in classrooms again, as well as in indoor communal areas. **Therefore, please make sure children bring face coverings to school with them every day, from tomorrow** – we only have a very limited number of spares in stock at the moment. If a child is medically exempt and you haven't already let us know, please email Mrs Moge ( [amogey@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:amogey@lymmhigh.org.uk) ). The government have said this policy will be reviewed on 26<sup>th</sup> January.
- We will still be carrying out **on-site COVID testing** for main school tomorrow and Sixth Form on Wednesday. Details of times etc will be provided via form tutors in the morning.

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- It is very important that **children take a lateral flow test at home this evening** to reduce the chances of any asymptomatic cases being in school tomorrow – children will be mixing on buses and in lessons before they have all been tested on-site. **Please make sure all children take tests today** and that you do not send them into school if they test positive. Please note, this now applies even if someone has tested positive for COVID within the last 90 days.
- Staff and students will then continue to be expected to take **lateral flow tests at home** twice a week (Sundays and Wednesdays) for the time being.
- In line with national guidelines, there has been a **change to the self-isolation period** for students testing positive for COVID. Young people may now take lateral flow tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. If both these test results are negative, and there is no high temperature, children may end self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to school from day 8.
- Children and young people under 18 years and 6 months who are identified as a **close contact** of someone with COVID should take a lateral flow test every day for 7 days and continue to attend school as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.
- Booster **vaccines** are being offered to clinically vulnerable 12–15-year-olds and all young people aged 16 or 17. The NHS will be providing details of this separately. Similarly, the NHS team will be in school on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> January to provide second doses of the vaccine for 12–15-year-olds; further information on this will be sent out shortly.
- Nothing has changed as regards plans for **GCSE and A' level examinations**. We will be in touch shortly (probably later this week) about details of assessments between now and Easter but the expectation remains that exams will go ahead and students should continue to work hard with that in mind.

As ever, things could change at any moment, but we will be in touch if that happens and I hope this letter provides sufficient detail for the time being. I remain conscious that there are lots of different opinions as to how the latest situation should be approached and hope you can see that we are trying hard to maintain a sensible balance whilst respecting government guidance. I am also very grateful for the pragmatic, 'can do' attitude that parents, carers, staff and students have shown so far and am sure this will continue to hold us in good stead this term.

Kind regards



Gwyn Williams