

2nd January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Latest COVID updates – schools returning in January

Firstly, Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you and your family have been able to enjoy some time together over the Christmas period. I wrote to you before we finished, and I have been able to not interrupt you until this point. However, with school returning on Tuesday, information in the media and confirmed Government information sent to me this morning, I thought it reasonable to inform you of some significant items in readiness for the new term with all things COVID related. Please note that this information is written for the audience of the age of children we have at the Academy (i.e. Year 7 to Year 11) – if you have children in other education settings then you will need to refer to guidance supplied by them.

Return to school. It is a legal requirement that all students return as planned. Hence, all students should be in school on Tuesday 4th January at the normal time.

Face coverings in education. It is now required that students in Year 7 and above in school wear a face mask whilst in the classroom. This builds on the requirement for them to be worn whilst in communal spaces. Ultimately this means that everyone needs to wear a face mask whilst indoors. This will be the expectation for all unless exempt. This will be in place for at least the first 3 weeks of term, reviewed on 26th January 2022 when all 'Plan B' regulations are due to be considered.

Could I ask for your support in ensuring your child has a suitable mask for school (plain if using a re-usable mask). We do carry a supply to support students who cannot get one or may break theirs, but we simply cannot afford to keep buying and giving masks to students at the rate we have been doing. Some schools have begun to charge for mask replacements. This is something I have resisted so far, but will consider if needed. Masks need to be considered as part of the Academy uniform until further notice.

Testing on return to school. We have been asked to offer all students an onsite test when they return to school. We have planned to complete the testing for all year groups during the day on Tuesday 4th January. This will be for students who we currently hold testing consent. If you have previously not given consent, but now wish to, then please email the office by the end of Monday 3rd January (office@toa.shaw-education.org.uk). The reason for onsite testing is to boost the testing participation and reduce transmission after a period of social mixing during the holidays.

After this initial onsite test, students should continue to test twice a week at home. The results of these tests should be reported to both the NHS Test and Trace and the Academy. Both links are shared again below. We will continue to provide testing kits to students to take home. Ideally, we would like students to test on a Monday and Thursday morning, but please do what best suits you.

[Report a lateral flow test result to the NHS](#)

[Report a lateral flow test result to The Orme Academy](#)

In a change to previous guidance, all students should engage with the above testing routines even if they have tested positive within 90 days once they have completed their isolation period for an infection.

Change to the isolation period. Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10-day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason. Individuals 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 you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and students can return to school from day 8. As always, please liaise with the Attendance Office Mrs Downs (ldowns@toa.shaw-edcuation.org.uk). Ideally, I would ask that you send in evidence of tests to confirm changes to students' attendance.

External examinations for Year 11. Summer exams are still expected to take place as previously planned. Formal external examinations in January (Health and Social Care, I-media) will still take place.

Vaccinations. Vaccinations for 12- to 15-year-olds have already been hosted in the Academy before Christmas. If students have now turned 12, or students missed this, then parents should take them for their vaccination externally if they wish. Students who are 16 may also access a vaccination.

It has now been advised by the JvCI (Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation) that a Pfizer booster be offered to children aged 12 to 15 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of immunosuppressed individuals, and those who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose. Also, all young people aged 16 can now access this booster.

I have tried to summarise the most significant and relevant updates in this letter. I do appreciate that it can be complicated and confusing. Contradictory or poorly communicated information in the media can also add to this confusion. Therefore, as always, I invite you to contact the Academy if you have any queries or questions and we will do our utmost to support you.

Your sincerely



Mr Mark Boughey
Principal