



21 October 2021

Dear Parents, Carers & Students,

We are nearly at the end of a very interesting half term! As a school we have been able to introduce some great new developments but unfortunately have had to endure a Covid wave significantly worse than anything we experienced last year.

We have had over 280 confirmed Covid cases since we returned in September including 10 staff so we have been very stretched at times. This compares with only 35 cases in total for all last year. There has also been a number of other "winter bugs" going around so there has been a lot of students absent with non-Covid illnesses. This picture is the same nationwide with over 200,000 students absent nationally last week for Covid related reasons and a national attendance rate of only 86% in secondary schools. The usual national attendance rate at this time of year would be in the mid-90s.

I think it is important to note that although Covid is quite often a fairly mild disease in the young, some people have been hit very hard with it and I want to wish all the staff and students still suffering with Covid a speedy and safe recovery.

Thankfully, the number of new cases each day in school has now slowed to a trickle, and we seem to have passed the peak. This contrasts with the national picture with cases going up and up at the moment and some early talk of problems in the NHS.

So although our Covid situation is improving I don't think we are out of the woods yet so we will maintain face masks in lessons after the half-term break. I hope we can ease up with them early in the new half-term and I will be watching the Covid figures carefully week by week. Thank you for your support with this initiative; it really seems to be working. Just a reminder that if a student needs to be exempt from face masks in lessons, please let their Head of Year know.

We still have Covid home testing kits in school and students can pick them up from Student Reception. We would strongly advise families to continue testing for Covid regularly.

Vaccinations

Covid vaccinations were carried out by the NHS Immunisation Team on Wednesday for those that had consented, and the process went very smoothly. The feedback we had is that our event was one of the best organised of any school they had been to, and our students were amongst the best behaved.

Just a reminder that the school can't offer medical advice on the subject of vaccines so if any families have any concerns, please contact your local NHS provider.

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School Developments

One very positive aspect of this year has been to return to running the school in a more normal manner. This has meant we have been able to introduce several new initiatives to further improve the school:

- The new rewards system has bedded in well with nearly 1000 positive rewards already issued to students.
- The new behaviour step system is also working well and is leading to greater clarity and consistency for students and staff.
- Our new Deputy Head, Matilde Warden, has been working with our middle leaders to further develop our curriculum and teaching framework. Some of the initial improvements will be released to students early in the spring term.
- The new student database system, CloudSchool, has now completely replaced CMIS / ePortal and is a far better system. We are currently working on the parent app which will be launched before Christmas.

Extra School Closure Day

As a result of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, schools nationally have been given an extra school closure day. We are conscious that we want to limit the impact on students so have chosen Thursday 23 December, a day when students are traditionally very tired and ready for Christmas! We also have a school training day on Wednesday 22 December so school will finish for students for the Christmas break on Tuesday 21 December (which we think is much better than finishing the day before Christmas Eve!). School reopens to students on Tuesday 11 January 2022.

School Site Funding

We have secured over £850,000 to improve our building from the Local Authority. The money will be spent on vital upgrades to the roof, ceilings and fabric of the building so might not be directly visible, but we hope to save some annual maintenance funds which can be put back into teaching and learning.

School Tours and Open Evening

Unfortunately, we couldn't hold our year 5/6 open evening this half term, but we have been able to offer Covid safe school tours during the day for prospective families. The feedback we have had from these tours has been very positive with many parents commenting on how calm, orderly, and friendly the school is.

Don't forget there are many videos about the school on the school website if you want to know more about what we do.

Thank you as ever for your ongoing support and I hope you have a great half term break.

Take care and with my best wishes,



Nick Goforth, Headteacher