



29 November 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

As I am sure you are aware the Government has introduced new national Covid safety precautions this week and I wanted to update you on our response at Belper.

The Government has suggested that a new Covid variant, Omicron, may be more transmissible and more vaccine resistant than previous strains. The good news is that it is rare in this country at the moment, but it is a concern and it seems sensible to take some extra initial precautions in school in the run up to Christmas and beyond.

It is important to point out that, whilst there is evidence that it may be more transmissible, it may not be more medically serious. The virus is being studied by the relevant medical experts and more should be known about it within weeks. The vaccine manufacturers are also studying it to see if their vaccines need adapting. This is something that already happens annually for flu for example.

**We will, therefore, be reintroducing face masks in lessons from Tuesday 30 November 2021. Please note that we don't have many face masks left in school to offer students so students should endeavour to bring their own. Reusable if possible.**

We will also be conducting optional Covid tests for students when they return in January after the Christmas holidays. This may mean that the return is staggered with different year groups coming back on different days, but we hope to get all year groups back in school by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> at the latest. This national initiative was only announced a couple of days ago so it will take us a little time to plan it thoroughly and we will let you know more as soon as we can.

We are continuing to distribute lateral flow test kits to students however, are finding that the take-up at the moment is disappointingly low. We have plenty home test kits in school, so will be continuing to encourage students to take these home and get into a regular twice-weekly testing routine (for example, every Wednesday and Sunday). If you wish to collect a test kit on behalf of your child in school, please pop into our Visitor Reception during school hours.

It is a difficult time and it is particularly disheartening to have to take such a backward step, but these precautions will help keep everyone safe and hopefully set up a good, and much needed, Christmas break for us all.

Thank you as ever for your ongoing support.

Take care and with my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'NGoforth'.

Nick Goforth, Headteacher