

Our Ref: DWt/LPu

7th January 2022

Dear Parent/Carers,

Thank you for all your support with our staggered start which enabled us to test the vast majority of our youngsters this week. As a result we managed to identify 17 positive cases and all are safe at home isolating and recovering. We wish them all the best and hope that they are not too unwell with it. I know that it was a disruptive start to the new term but having identified so many it was well worth doing to ensure that we get off to a safe start. We have had a total of 79 positive tests reported to us which includes all of the Christmas break as well as this week, inclusive of the 17 above. This number is broadly in line with the weekly average number of positive cases we had last term.

No need to get a PCR test if you register a positive Lateral Flow

This will be from Tuesday 11th January and is only meant to be a temporary measure we are told, this was announced to schools yesterday. All are still encouraged to take two Lateral Flow Tests weekly to identify asymptomatic cases. It means that anyone who receives a positive LFT result will be required to self-isolate immediately and will not need to take a confirmatory PCR test. The cynic in me says that this has been changed because there aren't enough PCR tests available, but who am I to suggest such a thing!

Anyone who develops one of the three main COVID-19 symptoms:

- A new and continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of taste or smell

Should stay at home and self-isolate and take a PCR test. They must self-isolate if they get a positive test result, even if they have had a recent negative lateral flow test - these rules have not changed.

A reminder that if positive cases take a Lateral Flow Test on day 6 and then again on day 7 (with a 24 hour gap in between), and both tests come back negative, they are able to be released from self-isolation on day 8 providing they no longer have a temperature. If there is still a temperature after day 10 then continue to isolate until the temperature falls.

Information on the vaccination programme for 12 to 15 year olds

A reminder that vaccination for this group will also continue to be carried out by the school age immunisation service (SAIS). It will be sometime between this coming Monday and February half-term, when we have the dates we will let you know.

Contingency planning

Should we be in a situation, which we are not yet, where we have significant staff shortages that leads us to not be able to staff the school effectively and deliver the quality of education that we need to i.e. there just simply aren't enough teachers, we plan to put a number of measures in place. We will prioritise our Year 11 youngsters as they have their exams in the summer and we really hope that they go ahead in the usual way after having to make significant changes in the last two exams seasons.

If the school has to close for a period

Should we get to this stage we will switch to live lessons via Microsoft Teams as I wrote to you on Tuesday. There will be some lessons that we will not be able to deliver in this way as certain members of

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staff would be unwell so would therefore be unable to do this, hence the reason why we would have had to switch the school to remote learning in the first place. **Again, I must stress that we are not currently there but I am letting you know our plans should we need to do this.**

Where there are significant staff absences but not enough to switch all to remote learning

If we get to this point we will make arrangements for a certain year group to work at home remotely.

These lessons will not be live as if we get to this stage we simply don't have the staff to deliver face to face or live lessons as this is the reason for us doing this. If they are ill, staff cannot deliver in the classroom or at home.

To help with potential forward planning, although to be honest I have no idea who will be absent on any given day as it is an incredibly fluid situation as you can imagine, we will have one of the following year groups working remotely from home on these fixed days:

Mondays and Tuesdays would see Year 8 on remote learning

Wednesdays Year 7

Thursdays Year 10

Fridays Year 9

Once again this is only a contingency should the need arise. We will look to rotate so we don't have the same year group negatively impacted over and over again. It is not ideal potentially having Year 8 out for two days but we are trying to do all we can to keep our Year 11 in. We plan to use this sparingly and for as shorter time as possible. I would dearly love to be in a position where I could give you plenty of notice but with this virus it is just not possible, I am aiming for at least 24 hours. To make it completely clear it may well be for example that Year 8 work remotely from home Monday and Tuesday of that week and all the other year groups are in. The following week it may well be Year 7 are working from home on Wednesday and Year 8 and the rest of the school are learning on-site. It is possible that two year groups could be working remotely during the same week, we just do not know at present.

Why can't other measures be taken?

There have been suggestions by the Department for Education that where there are significant teacher absences we could put classes together. Teaching 90 or 120 youngsters at once and all together is a really poor idea, and where do I put them all and which subject gets priority? We have put two smaller classes in the same subject and same year group together where they can all fit into one classroom, they therefore still have access to a subject specialist. Going much larger than that leads to unnecessary disruption and the quality of learning will be greatly diminished.

There are external supply teachers, which on occasion we do have to use, but the issues with that are it is very expensive and there isn't a huge pool from which to draw from, all schools are trying to

get in the same people.

The government also said that we should go out to retired teachers and pay them to come in and teach. Those that I have contacted said to me that they were quite happy being retired and why would they put themselves in a vulnerable position such as being surrounded by a large number of people on a daily basis if they are safe and happy at home, especially as they are older?

Where we have had absences, and we will continue to do this where possible, our Heads of Faculty have



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put a subject specialist in with a class to ensure they do not miss out on too much for too long.

Access to Remote Learning

All will still be able to access their full timetable via independent lessons on Microsoft Teams. As I have stated these will not be live video lessons, but lesson resources will be provided to those impacted, who will be expected to complete tasks and turn them in via Microsoft Teams.

For guidance on how to use Microsoft Teams, please see the attached document. A video demonstrating how to access and turn in remote learning on Teams can be viewed here:

[How to Check and Turn in Remote Learning Assignments on Microsoft Teams](#)

If your youngster has not received the lesson resources they should have, please contact the relevant Head of Faculty via their email address, which is on this page: <https://www.woodlandsschool.org/staffing>. Alternatively, contact Mr Roberts at ero@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk.

If you have any technical issues with Microsoft Teams, please contact remotelearningsupport@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk or once again Mr Roberts at ero@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk.

If your young person does not have a laptop/tablet/PC to work from at home, the school can loan a device. Email ero@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk if you did not complete the survey sent out.

On-site provision for our vulnerable youngsters

Where a year group has to switch to remote learning, we are still legally required to offer an on-site provision for our vulnerable youngsters as before; however this list has grown significantly so we will need up to four classrooms and teachers to staff their independent work.

Moving forward

I do hope this adds some clarity to an ever-changing and somewhat confusing situation. We will continue to act in the best interest of our young people, trying to keep them safe at the same time as doing our very best to keep them learning. I will be sharing our plans with all youngsters via a remote assembly during tutor time this morning so all will be aware.

Thank you once again for all your support.

Best wishes,

Mr David Wright
Head Teacher