

7<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear parents/carers,

**Re: updates for the remainder of the Autumn term**

I am writing to you today to provide important information as we head towards the Christmas break and the New Year. We still continue to operate very firmly under the cloud of the COVID- 19 pandemic. The new Omicron variant will inevitably impact on all schools as people have to isolate if they are close contacts of those infected.

It is testament to our student population, families and staff that the school continues to function so successfully during such difficult times. I thank you all for your continued support. Our stance of wearing masks since our return in September has certainly helped however, we still have a minority who seem to not realise its importance in such a large school. We really **need to ensure rules are followed for mask wearing in corridors and public areas** to avoid having to introduce the wearing of them in classes as may be the case if directed to us by the local public health team. This week further lateral flow tests have been distributed to all students. Could I remind you that the **twice weekly lateral flow test** is helping ensure that we minimise all our risks to everyone, so **please support the school by encouraging your child to complete them**.

**Our remote learning strategy will continue to come into effect for isolating students** so that they can maintain engagement with the work that is being covered during lessons via Microsoft Teams (if they are well enough).

As mentioned by the government last week, **all students will be tested at school prior to their return after Christmas via Lateral Flow Tests (LFT)**. Therefore, as in previous starts to the term we will need to stagger the return of students following testing (your child will be returning on different days dependant upon which year group they are in so that we can facilitate lateral flow testing). Testing will take place as before in the sports hall.

I am sure you can appreciate the additional burden that this places on school to facilitate testing for over 1900 students so I thank you for your cooperation.

The details are laid out below:

	Testing of students	Return to school of students
Year 7	Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January 9am- 12pm	Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am
Year 8	Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 9am – 12pm	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am
Year 9	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January 9am – 12pm	Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am
Year 10	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January 12pm – 3pm	Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am
Year 11	Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January 12pm – 3pm	Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am
6 <sup>th</sup> Form	Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 12pm – 3pm	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January 8.40am

All students will have live lessons via Microsoft Teams for the whole period out of school due to testing (from Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January until their return to school).

Students who have parental consent to do a LFT should attending testing during their year group testing slot (anytime during the 3 hours allocated) as per above table.

All students whose families have already given consent for LFT done at the start of the academic year do not need to complete a consent form again as we have this recorded. For parents/carers who have changed their mind and want their child to have a LFT before they return to school in January, please accompany your child to the sports hall to fill a consent form on their allocated day. Thank you.

We find it incredibly frustrating that we are **unable to invite families into the building for our usual evening events**. I know that there will be many Years 7 and 8, and possibly Year 9 parents/carers who have never stepped foot within the school building, or put a name to a face. This is an ongoing frustration, but a necessary one whilst we continue to have such high levels of infection in the Local Authority.

Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions we are **unable to have a live audience for the Christmas Concert on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December**. However, over the coming days we will be recording the performance of our talented students to share with you all. More information to follow regarding this.

### **Inclement weather**

Last week many areas were affected by snow, but thankfully we managed to avoid a heavy downfall. Should we need to close the school, we will utilise the following methods of communication to attempt to let families know as soon as possible about any school closures. These are: school's website and Twitter account / Radio WM / Free radio Birmingham / Free radio Black Country / Heart FM / Capital FM. Details will also be posted on the Local Authority website.

Work will be provided for students during closure again through Microsoft Teams by 10.00am on the day but will vary in format from normal in the fact that staff may need to manage their own children at home. Lessons will be in the form of knowledge recall practice and will only be approximately 40 minutes for each lesson. This will give children enough time to enjoy the snow but also complete work which has been set.

### **Staff CPD day**

Just a reminder that there is a staff professional development day on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January** and therefore school will be **closed to students** on that day.

### **New Climbing wall**

Last week our climbing wall which was partly funded by the Army was finally completed. This will be a great resource for our CCF cadets and our PE students. We are working on our next project to come online. Watch out for further information about it next Spring.



### Uniform

It is important that we maintain the highest possible standards of uniform and we are unfortunately seeing more of the **following items which are not permitted**: hoodies, trainers, leggings or skinny trousers. Please have a look at our school's website to ensure your child is complying fully with our uniform policy in readiness for their return in January.

### Nut allergy

Please note that we now have a student at Phoenix who has an airborne anaphylactic reaction to peanuts. Unfortunately, this can be fatal therefore could I please ask that parents/carers try and **avoid sending their children in school with anything containing peanuts** (e.g. snickers). Many thanks for your cooperation with this.

### Parent governors

I am pleased to announce that we now have **two new parent governors** supporting the school. Premjit Dosanjh and Sarah Prescott were elected unopposed as our newest parent governors. Mrs Dosanjh is a parent of a Y8 student & Miss Prescott is a parent of a Y7 student.

### Parent view

With the difficulties of meeting parents/carers face to face over the last almost two years it has been difficult to get regular feedback. It is important that we get your feedback to ensure that our effectiveness is regularly reviewed. Therefore, could I **please** ask parents/carers to **complete the following survey by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December**; it is very similar to an Ofsted survey. Your support is very much appreciated and valued.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ParentViewDec2021>

### Wellbeing

I would like to remind you that at the end of term, wellbeing support for students out of school hours is available via [www.Kooth.com](http://www.Kooth.com) - run by the NHS & free for all Sandwell students.

### Other upcoming events and deadlines

- Christmas Jumper Day will be on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December
- Christmas Dinner Day will be on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December
- School term will finish on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December as per details below.

As with tradition at the end of the term, **school will be closing a little earlier than normal on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December** – students will finish at the following times:

12.30pm – Years 8, 10, 12 & 13

12.45pm – Years 7, 9 & 11

Yours faithfully,



Mike Smith  
Head teacher