

TLA / GPA

2nd January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

Changes to Covid Arrangements – January 2022

I hope that you have all had an enjoyable and restful Christmas break and should like to wish all members of our community a Happy New Year.

As per our letter of 28th December, we are currently still planning for all students to undertake lateral flow tests on site on either Tuesday 4th or Wednesday 5th January, in line with the published schedule, prior to returning to school. Given the current level of Covid infections, **it is very important that a home lateral flow test is undertaken prior to this**, in order to intercept positive cases as early as possible. If your child has not done one yet, please may I recommend that this is completed today, or by tomorrow at the latest. Please note that **even if someone has tested positive for Covid-19 within the last 90 days, they are strongly encouraged to take part in LFD testing on-site or at home once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection.**

In traditional last-minute fashion, we have received, just this morning, updated guidance from the Department for Education regarding Covid measures to be implemented in schools at the start of the Spring Term. The key points are as follows:

Face Coverings

- **All non-exempt secondary-aged students will be expected to wear masks in classrooms as well as in communal areas from January.** Staff must also wear masks when circulating the room and talking to students but may choose to remove their mask if they are more than 2m away from students at the front of the classroom. The guidance states that *“The advice on face coverings in classrooms will be in place until Wednesday 26 January, when Plan B regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed.”*, so hopefully this may just be a short-term measure.
- We have been advised that a supply of face coverings is being provided free to schools, to maintain *“a small contingency stock of face coverings available if an individual has forgotten or damaged their own.”* We will therefore be issuing some spare masks to tutors to give out at the start of the day to anyone who does not have one and we will temporarily suspend the 50p charge for these, up to 26th January in the first instance. However, **it will help us greatly if parents can ensure their child comes to school equipped with a face covering**, since we will need to reinstate the charge once this free stock is depleted.

Isolation rules

- Staff and students who test positive for Covid-19, must self-isolate. However, **individuals may be released from self-isolation early if they have no Covid or cold-like symptoms AND have returned a negative Lateral Flow Test result on Day 6 and Day 7 with those tests being taken at least 24 hours apart.** They would be able to return to school/work on Day 8 (Day 1 being the day after symptoms started, or the day after a positive test if they were asymptomatic). It would also be the case that they could be released on Day 9 if they had negative LFTs on Day 7 and 8 etc. The Government guidance does, however, also strongly advise people who do return before Day 10 to limit close contact with others in crowded or

ALEC HUNTER ACADEMY Stubbs Lane, Braintree, Essex CM7 3NR.
t: 01376 321813 e: admin@alechunter.com w: www.alechunter.com

poorly ventilated spaces and if you were in any doubt, we would recommend seeking advice from the NHS. Anyone who is unable to take LFTs will need to complete the full 10-day period of self-isolation.

- If your child is identified as a close contact of a Covid case, they do not need to self-isolate, but they **are advised to take daily Lateral Flow Tests for 7 days**. You will continue to be advised by the NHS as to whether your child is a close contact, the school plays no part in this anymore, but please be cautious and proactive. If someone with whom your child has frequent contact tests positive, it would be advisable to start 7 days of LFD tests immediately, regardless of NHS instruction. If we are notified of more than 3 positive cases within a single tutor group, we will advise the same course of action for all students in that group.

Extra-Curricular Activity

There is no change to the guidance around **extra-curricular activity** at present, and clubs can continue to go ahead.

Contingency Plans

The messages from the Government all indicate that they are completely dedicated to maintaining face-to-face education and are encouraging schools to consider adopting flexible arrangements in school, in the face of significant staff absences, rather than resorting to remote education. I should therefore like to appeal to you in advance for patience and understanding as we approach what will surely be a challenging half-term. We will do our utmost to maintain high standards and the best quality service we can offer, but it is likely that our resources will come under considerable pressure. This may mean that, at times, we will need to merge classes, or rely on supply staff (if we can source any) or set work for classes under the supervision of non-subject specialists or support staff. We know that this is far from ideal, but we trust that you will appreciate the difficulties we are facing and support our efforts.

It is quite possible, from previous experience, that there will be further tweaks to guidance in the coming days. I shall endeavour to keep you fully briefed on anything that will affect your child's return to school. In the meantime, I should like to send you all my very best wishes for a safe, healthy and successful 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Mr T. Lawn
Headteacher