



30 November 2021

Rachel Hutchinson
Principal

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: COVID-19 Update: new measures announced in response to the Omicron variant

On Saturday, 27 November, the Prime Minister announced new temporary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK. The new measures have been introduced as a precaution to slow down the spread of the variant while the government gathers more information. The government will continue to keep this under review as the situation develops.

We are writing to identify key messages to support keeping the College safe, the expectations over the winter break and finally, what the College will be doing upon return for the Spring Term on Tuesday, 4 January 2022.

For further up to date information and guidance please see the national advice listed in the link below.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-and-support)

Further advice promoting the wearing of face masks to reduce transmission

Face coverings in education settings

From 29 November, the government has advised that face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all education settings by staff, visitors and students unless they are exempt. Students in Year 7 or above should continue to wear face coverings on public and school transport, unless they are exempt.

Contact tracing and isolation

[The current guidance on contact tracing](#) and isolation remains in place. In addition to these, any suspected or confirmed close contacts of the Omicron variant will be asked to isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status or age. You will be contacted directly and told to isolate. You will not be contacted by the College but by NHS Test and Trace.

Lateral flow testing during the holidays

Although the College will be closed over the Christmas period, all staff and students should test over the holidays in line with national guidance. This means that they should include testing if they will be in a high-risk situation that day, and before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19.

The College is strongly advising that students self-test at home either in the evening or morning before they return on Tuesday, 4 January 2022.

Testing at the College upon return

All secondary schools are to prepare to test students once on-site on return in January.

We will communicate how this will be delivered and be seeking consent in the coming days and over the holiday period as we run up to the return to College.

Testing continues to play a vital role in keeping COVID-19 out of schools. Testing all students in College boosts testing participation and will help reduce transmission after a

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period of social mixing over the school holidays. After the onsite test on return, students should continue to test in line with government guidelines.

Vaccination

The government advise that all eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the COVID-19 vaccine, including boosters.

Vaccines are our best defence against helping to protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on.

To book a vaccination please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the letter from Rob Haring, CEO of Westcountry Schools Trust that was sent earlier today. All scheduled events involving visitors to the College campus, such as the Careers Fair, Parent Forum, tours of the College and large scale events will be postponed.

The College will continue to deliver core teaching activities, including the Enrichment Programme and scheduled fixtures. However, please be mindful that as COVID-19 rates are high and staff absence continue to rise, teaching cover by supply staff is higher than normal. We will endeavour to provide the best quality education wherever possible and thank you in advance for supporting the College on this matter.

Yours faithfully

Rachel Hutchinson
Principal