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Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you very much for all your support in what was a most complicated start to the term last week, with so many different elements to navigate: remote learning via Show My Homework and Microsoft Teams; on-site LFD testing; the return of face-coverings in classrooms and the probably inevitable student and staff absence due to Covid. Some of the elements were unique to last week, but many of them will probably be a feature of our work in school for at least the next few weeks. It certainly looks like the probability of all students have to learn remotely from home is lower now than it appeared to be before Christmas. Indeed, one of the reasons for providing learning via Teams for Years 7 and 8 last Thursday was to do a 'trial run' and allow the inevitable 'hiccups' to be noted in advance of the possibility of our younger students having to learn that way for a longer period of time this term.

Given the all the complexities within current circumstances, I thought the following summary of government guidance might be helpful, with the guidance quoted directly where appropriate:

What Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing should now be taking place?

Both staff and students should now be testing twice-weekly at home using the LFD testing kits available in school.

Should I test if I have recently had Covid?

A reminder 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 at home once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection. This is a change to the previous position because they can be infected with Omicron even when they have previously been infected with Covid-19."

What is the change from this Tuesday?

A reminder that from this Tuesday (11th January), "confirmatory PCR tests following a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test result are to be temporarily suspended. This will mean that anyone who receives a positive LFD test result will be required to self-isolate immediately and will not be required to take a confirmatory PCR test" (although presumably they still can do if they choose to?).

How can self-isolation finish early?

The Department for Education have clarified their previous guidance regarding Day 6 and 7 LFD testing to explain that it is possible to attend school on Day 7 if the Day 6 test is taken first thing in the morning. If a test is taken at 7am on Day 6 for example and is negative, another (negative result) test is taken 24 hours later (ie 7am on Day 7) and a student no longer has a high temperature, then they can end their self-isolation immediately and hence can attend school on Day 7.

What if my LFD test results are still positive?

If students are still returning positive LFD test results, then they should continue to self-isolate for the full 10-day self-isolation period. After then (ie on Day 11), "they may return to their education setting and are not required to take any more LFD tests to release themselves from isolation even if they have positive LFD test results. This is because they are unlikely to be infectious after the 10th day of their isolation period. If they still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, then they should stay at home and seek medical advice."

What if I am a 'close contact'?

A reminder that "students who are close contacts of positive cases can continue to attend school but should take a daily LFD test" for 7 days after their 'close contact'.

Student Absence

There are a significant number of students who are unfortunately absent with Covid at this present time. A reminder that learning will be provided for these students via Microsoft Teams, for them to access and keep up with their peers in school if they are well enough to do so.

Face-Coverings

Thank you to students for the mature way in which they have responded to the latest expectation regarding face-covering wearing in lessons. Hopefully this will be for the shortest period of time possible, with a government review of the measure planned for 26th January.

Vaccinations

Second doses of the Covid-19 vaccinations will be offered to students in school later this term. As soon as the School Age Immunisation Service confirms the dates of these second vaccinations then I will let parents know straightaway.

Parent Consultation Evenings

A reminder that we have four Parent Consultation Evenings scheduled for this half-term, all of which will take place remotely, with booking details provided to parents as and when appropriate:

Year 8:	Wednesday 12 th January
Year 7:	Thursday 20 th January
Year 12:	Thursday 10 th February
Year 10:	Wednesday 16 th February

A56 Roadworks

In addition to all the Covid complications this term, we also need to navigate the disruption generated by the roadworks which will be in place for the next 3 months whilst a new cycle path is built for our students between Frodsham and the school. I don't think there is any obvious way of easing the congestion that will be caused at the start and end of the school day and the need to allow longer time for journeys is probably inevitable. The temptation for students to leave stationary traffic in a morning and walk the last 100m or so to school is undeniable, but I would please ask that this temptation is resisted due to the inherent dangers of crossing the road in amongst the roadworks and the heavy traffic negotiating them.

Staffing News

Sadly, we said farewell last week to Mrs Wright, who after over 10 years the school working in a variety of roles has moved on to a Learning Mentor post at The Abbey School in Chester. Mrs Wright will probably be missed most by our current Year 11 students, whom she has supported with so much commitment and care in her recent Student Support Coordinator role. We wish Mrs Wright all the very best for the future, as we also do Miss Wright, who finished in her ICT Support Technician role with us last week in order to take up a UX Designer role on completion of her degree. Following Miss Wright's departure, we welcome Mr Hayes to the school, who has joined the ICT Support Team this term.

Very best wishes,

Martin Hill
Headteacher