

Friday 7 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year! I hope that the Christmas and new year period went well for you, though I know that for many of us plans had to be changed at the last minute. It has been an absolute pleasure to welcome back students after the break, and they all seem very happy to be here too!

### **Thank you**

Thank you to all the parents and carers who have been testing their children at home; this is helping to keep us all safe. As a parent myself, I know it's a bit of a pain to have to keep on testing children. At least the newer tests only involve the nose and not the throat, which makes it easier.

I urge all parents and carers to continue with (or start) testing their children. This will reduce the risk of the virus spreading in school. If too many staff catch the virus it may result in us not being able to be fully open.

I am very grateful to parents and carers that have reported positive tests and this has given us a safer start to the term, even though it is difficult for children who need to isolate (and parents/carers that need to look after them). We currently have 4 students who have tested positive (3 over the holidays).

### **Staff absence**

You'll have read or heard about how many schools, the NHS, and other services are being affected by the rise in staff absence due to this new variant of Covid, and we're all hoping that the peak of this wave is passing, in London at least.

This week we have had 12-13 staff absent each day. That's not all due to Covid, and so some was already covered, but it would be very difficult to continue with business as usual if that continued or got worse. We will do everything we can to remain fully open, including pre-booking as many agency staff as we reasonably can.

It is impossible to predict what the next few weeks will bring, but if staff absence increases there remains the risk that we will not have enough staff to run properly or safely and so some classes may need to move to remote learning. We need your help to avoid that.

## **What can parents do to help the school stay fully open?**

Parents and carers can help keep the school fully open in a number of ways:

### **1. Test**

Use lateral flow tests on your child and self at least twice per week; there is no problem with testing daily if you have enough tests! I know it sometimes takes several tries, but I've found the quickest way is to keep trying to order online. It's much quicker if you have an account already set up. You can order 7 tests per day [here](#).

All staff are self-testing daily to keep everyone safe. The more students we have testing, the less chance there is of staff being absent.

### **2. Get vaccinated**

Everybody aged 12 upwards is eligible for vaccination. Vaccination remains the most effective way to protect yourself and others from severe illness. Vaccinations can be booked [here](#)

### **3. Wear a face covering**

All students should wear a face covering in school unless they are exempt. At the moment, this includes during lessons as well as in corridors. Parents and carers can help by getting their children used to this, preferably with a reusable face covering that you send in with your child.

## **How does this help?**

If we can reduce the risk of staff catching the virus, we will reduce staff absence and hopefully keep it at a level where we can keep the school open to all classes. None of the staff want to return to remote learning as we know how much better it is for students to be in school. To achieve this, we need to minimise the risk of staff catching the virus in school, by following the steps above.

As always, thank you for your support in keeping our school safe.

Kind regards,



Kevin McDonnell  
Headteacher