

9 December 2021

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Dear Parent/Carer

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you to provide an update about our end of term and start of term arrangements, as well as an update on Covid-19 guidance for schools.

End of term and start of term arrangements

The Autumn Term ends on Friday 17 December. Students will be dismissed at 2pm. The Spring Term starts on Wednesday 5 January (please note that Monday 3 January is a Bank Holiday and Tuesday 4 January is an INSET day for staff).

Due to updated government guidance relating to Covid testing in school at the start of term, we have been advised to stagger the return of students in order to facilitate the testing process which will help reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission in school. As ever, this is our utmost priority and has been at the forefront of our decision making.

Therefore, students will return to school as follows:

- Years 10-13 will return on Wednesday 5 January
- Years 7-9 will return on Thursday 6 January

All students should arrive on site by 8:45am. Please note that from 5 January, all students will finish at the usual finish time of 3:00pm.

Covid-19 Update

I am sure you will be aware of recent developments regarding the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in the UK. The Department for Education has issued updated guidance for schools, and Northumberland Public Health Team have issued further recommendations for schools which we are following very carefully. Although cases in school remain fairly low, I wanted to provide an update about the measures we currently have in place in school to minimise the risk of transmission:

Testing

We continue to encourage all students to take twice weekly lateral flow tests at home. If your child tests positive on a lateral flow test, it is important that they do not attend school and that they book a PCR test immediately. Tests will be provided for all students to take home for the Christmas break; they are available for students to collect at any time from reception.

In addition, students are being asked to undertake **one test on-site in school at the start of term**, followed by an LFD self-test at home 3-4 days later. They should then continue to test in line with government guidelines. A consent form was issued to parents with the closing date of 9 December 2021, therefore all students that have consent will be tested at the start of term.

Please remember that LFD testing is suitable for those who do not have symptoms. It helps identify asymptomatic positive cases quickly so that those who test positive can self-isolate and not pass on the virus to others. Anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 should self-isolate and book a PCR test via the NHS website [Get tested for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) or by calling the NHS 111 helpline.

Contact tracing and isolation

Please note that the current guidance is clear that close contacts of those testing positive do not need to self-isolate under normal circumstances. However, close contacts of someone who tests positive for the new Omicron variant will be advised by the NHS to isolate for 10 days. Please note that schools are not involved in contact tracing; this process is managed solely by the NHS who will contact you if you are a close contact of a positive case.

Entry and exit to the building

Years 7-9 will continue to enter and exit school via the main drive and the side gates to the yard; years 10 and 11 will continue to enter and exit via the rear door; Sixth Form students should continue to enter and exit via the main entrance. Staggering these entry points has helped improve the flow of students around the building and reduce busy 'pinch points'.

Please note that from the start of the Spring Term (January 2022) we will revert to a **3:00pm finish time for all year groups**.

Face Coverings

Face coverings should be worn indoors in school in all communal areas by students and staff, unless they are medically exempt. Face coverings should also be worn on public and school transport. This is a measure which our students are familiar with, and they have responded well to the re-introduction of face coverings this half term. Please ensure that your child has a supply of face coverings to bring to school with them. Reusable face coverings should be cleaned regularly. Replacement face coverings are available from reception for a small charge.

Limiting events and visitors into school

We are currently limiting face to face events and meetings in school and moving non-essential events online where it is practical to do so. Essential meetings will continue to take place face to face, with appropriate Covid-19 controls in place.

Vaccination

If your child is age 12 or over and has not been vaccinated, we would strongly encourage you to book them in for their vaccine. Advice from the NHS is that vaccines are the best defence against Covid-19. The vaccination team have already visited school, however if your child missed out on the in-school vaccination programme, you can book a vaccination on the NHS website.

Ventilation of classrooms

Classrooms and other areas of school are ventilated at all times (through open windows or air conditioning). There are CO2 monitors in all classrooms which are used to monitor the air quality. This is helping to ensure that the risk of transmission in classrooms is minimised.

Finally...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your support this term in ensuring a safe and purposeful return to normal school routines. You will receive our newsletter shortly which contains details of some of the fantastic things which have been taking place in school this term. Our students have continued to impress us with their progress and their eagerness to get involved in all aspects of school life.

On behalf of all of the staff here at Bedlington Academy, I wish you a very safe and happy Christmas and look forward to welcoming our students back in January.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Lamb
Head of School