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Head of School Mrs S Hallsworth
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1.12.21

Dear Parents and Carers,

On Sunday 28 November 2021, due to the identification of cases of the B.1.1.529 COVID-19 strain within the UK (also known as Omicron) the Government announced the reintroduction of some enhanced COVID measures that the general public and education settings should take. Due to its recent emergence, there are many unanswered questions about the impact that this strain will have, for example whether it is more transmissible than the Delta variant, whether it is more likely to increase pressure on NHS services, and whether existing vaccines and other treatments will be as effective against this new strain compared to previous and current strains of the virus.

The measures for education settings have been outlined by the Department for Education (DFE) and include the recommended use of face coverings within education settings. As we are a primary school, this measure applies to staff and visitors when they are in corridors and communal areas.

In addition to the DFE recommendations we have received a letter from Dean Wallace who is the Director for Public Health in Derbyshire. He has advised that we continue with the many measures we have in place:

- ✓ Hand hygiene – Regular handwashing and hand sanitiser use.
- ✓ Good ventilation - our windows remain open and as mentioned in the last newsletter children can wear additional layers under their uniform in colder weather. Also, our CO2 monitors have now arrived to assist us in monitoring ventilation.
- ✓ Cleaning – Regular cleaning is maintained which focusses on frequently touched surfaces.
- ✓ Testing – Staff continue to be encouraged to use Lateral Flow Devices twice weekly
- ✓ Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms – any pupils or staff with COVID-19 symptoms are advised to stay at home, self-isolate and book a PCR test as soon as possible and remain at home until the PCR result comes through.
- ✓ Close contacts – Staff and pupils who are contacted by Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive case are to access PCR testing as soon as possible. As announced by the Government on Sunday, close contacts of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of

vaccination status and age, will be required to self-isolate for 10 days following the date of last contact. These people will be contacted directly, required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test.

We wanted to reassure you that whilst our numbers of COVID-19 positive cases at any one time since the start of term have remained relatively low across school, we are taking nothing for granted. There still remains a need for caution and sensible action especially at a time when so many families are looking forward to spending Christmas together this year. In addition to the measures we have in place, Dean Wallace has advised schools to minimise non-essential visitors on site. This means that unfortunately parents are not able to come into school to see the Nativity performances by Reception and Y2 children. Instead these will be filmed and posted on our website. We are aware that there are a very small number of children whose parents have not given permission for them to appear on the website. If you would like them to, on this occasion, please put this in writing for the R/Y2 class teachers.

Dean Wallace has also recommended we minimise interaction between year groups and has asked us to consider staggered start and finish times. We feel that the entrance and exit procedures we have in place already limit 'pinch-points' in schools where year groups could potentially cross. Parents have continued to maintain sensible distancing when arriving and picking up their children so we feel that a change to staggered starts and finish times is not necessary at this time. We will, of course, let you know if that changes.

We realise that some parents will be disappointed that they are not coming into school for the Nativity performances but we also realise many will feel relieved that we are continuing to do our best to put appropriate measures in place to ensure that face-to-face education continues at our school.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation as we continue through the pandemic.

Keep safe and stay well,

Mrs Hallsworth and Mr Hetherington
Head of School Executive Head