4th January 2022

Dear Varndean Families

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Happy New Year and hope that you managed to enjoy the two week break.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming students back into school this week for the Spring term once the lateral flow testing has taken place today and tomorrow. Our message remains one of 'Keep Covid Out' and we are currently updating our risk assessment in line with the new guidance released on Sunday by the Department for Education.

Lateral Flow Testing
Please continue to test twice a week using the lateral flow testing kits provided. This helps identify asymptomatic cases and reduce the spread of Covid in the classroom. If the LFT is positive, please book a PCR test and continue to inform the school through covid@varndean.co.uk of the outcome.

One of the changes is for those who have previously tested positive for Covid within the last 90 days. The Government is strongly encouraging **all** to take part in LFT testing once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection.

Face Coverings
One of the other updates is that face coverings are now required in classrooms in addition to communal areas for all year groups. The advice is short term only, to support students and teachers as they return to school this term and builds on the existing guidance that recommends face coverings for all in communal areas of all settings. The advice on face coverings in classrooms will be in place until Wednesday 26th January, when Plan B regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed by the Government and we will update you as soon as we know. This does not include students who are exempt and have a sunflower badge.

We would be grateful if you could remind your child each morning to have a face covering in their bag so that learning is not disrupted having to collect one from reception.

Self-isolation
Since Wednesday 22nd December, the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, as long as they conduct daily LFT testing.

Individuals may now take LFT tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation, and may return to school on day 8. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to school from day 8.

Daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19
Track and trace is being operated by the NHS and not the school. People who are fully vaccinated, or young people identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFT test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time. If the test is positive, they should follow the stay at home rules: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Our students continue to adapt incredibly well to the constant changing of expectations due to Covid and I look forward to seeing the students back for in-person learning. Please see our letter from 17th December as a reminder of the timings for in-school testing and a reminder that students should be accessing work on Google classroom whilst not in school for their testing. Please do contact your child's school base if you have any questions regarding the start of term. We will continue to keep you updated over the coming weeks and hope that the start of 2022 allows us to get back to school life as smoothly as possible.

Warm regards

Shelley Baker