



Monday, 10 January 2022

Covid-19 Safety Update for Parents and Carers – January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

First of all, a happy New Year to you and your family. I do hope you enjoyed an excellent Christmas holiday together. We are certainly looking forward to welcoming students back to school this week and we thank you for your support with the lateral flow tests conducted in school this week. The frequent changes to Covid-19 safety guidance can sometimes lead to confusion so I summarise the key points below. Rest assured that all existing safety measures will remain in place including in-day cleaning, adequate ventilation, adjustments to assemblies by using MS Teams and the continued use of hand sanitiser.

Face coverings - Year 7 and above

The Government have updated their guidance and now recommends that face coverings are worn in classrooms where students in Year 7 and above are educated. This is an interim measure and is in place until Wednesday 26 January 2022, when all measures will be reviewed in line with Plan B. Please ensure that your child brings a face mask to school unless they are exempt.

Clarification on the use of face coverings in examinations and assessments

Following the temporary reintroduction of face coverings in classrooms, the Public Health guidance to support exams was updated on Sunday 2 January. This guidance sets out that we would not ordinarily expect candidates and invigilators to wear face coverings during exams and assessments, but only on arrival and departure. Both candidates and invigilators may wear face coverings if they wish to do so.

We will follow this guidance for mock exams and other assessments taking place under exam conditions or as close to exam conditions as possible, including any taking place to gather evidence for Teacher Assessed Grades under the guidance published by Ofqual on Thursday 11 November. This includes circumstances where these assessments take place in classrooms.

For vocational and technical qualifications where the exam or assessment may require more interaction with an invigilator or others, such as a practical demonstration, we have been given the flexibility to recommend that face coverings be worn if we deem this appropriate.

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Changes to the self-isolation period

Since Wednesday 22 December, the Government updated their guidance in relation to the self-isolation period for those who record a positive PCR test, reducing it from 10 days to 7 days. Individuals may now take LFD 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. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10-day period of self-isolation.

Confirmatory PCR Tests

From Tuesday 11 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, in line with the new self-isolation guidance, and will not be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This coincides with a high prevalence of Covid in the UK and means that the chances of a false positive from a lateral flow test are very low. The intention of the changes will also allow those who are asymptomatic to return to work more quickly. With that said, as a reminder this only applies for asymptomatic testing. Anyone who develops Covid-19 symptoms should still take a PCR test.

Daily testing for close contacts

People who are fully vaccinated, or children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with Covid-19, should take an LFD 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. Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing.

Remote Education

The latest guidance continues to outline the priority to keep education settings open and recognises the difficulties of this with increasing infection rates. If our school does experience any concerns around teaching and learning as a result of staff availability, the Head of School will liaise with the Nova Education Trust leadership team regarding the most appropriate course of action. For students that have to self-isolate, if fit to do so, they should engage with the 'Self-isolation Work' set by departments found in the 'subjects' area of the school website.

Yours sincerely,



Dr C Eardley
Head of School