21st December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

As we reach the end of term, we want to thank you again for all your support during such a challenging time. I am aware that many families are having to rethink their Christmas plans after a member of their loved ones has tested positive for Covid and our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

We know that COVID-19 is still with us and that case rates are currently rising in Bolton and across the country. We are working with Bolton’s Public Health team to do all we can to help stop the spread. The following information is designed to keep you in the picture.

**Help to keep school safe when we return after Christmas.** Many people who become infected with COVID-19 don’t have symptoms but can still infect others. Testing regularly increases the chances of detecting COVID-19 when you are infectious but are not displaying symptoms, helping to make sure you do not spread COVID-19 by staying at home and self-isolating immediately.Remember to report your result at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> and if positive, self-isolate immediately and take a PCR test.

**Daily testing for close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases.** Those aged between 5 to 18 years and 6 months who are contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case should take daily lateral flow tests. Contacts should test every day for 7 days, or until 10 days since their last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier. If they don't know the date of contact, they should take an LFD test every day for 7 days after they are notified of the contact. Contacts should take this daily test before they leave the house for the first time that day.

Even if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and are exempt from isolation, they are strongly advised to take part in daily testing. If the LFD test is positive, they should also take a confirmatory PCR even if it is within the 90 days. This is because we know people can be infected with Omicron even when they have had previous covid infection.

**Where can I get lateral flow test kits?** In Bolton you can collect lateral flow tests from school, pharmacies or from the community testing sites at:

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| **Bolton Arena**  Arena Approach, Horwich, Bolton BL6 6LB  Open: Monday - Friday 08:00 to 15:30  Walk-in, no appointment necessary  Toilets and Wheelchair Access  Free Parking | **Community Testing Hub - Town Centre - Victoria Plaza**  Oxford Street, Bolton, BL11RD  Open: 7 days a week  Mon, Tues, Wed, Sat: 08:30 to 16:30  Thurs: 09:30 to 17:30  Sunday: 10:30 to 15:30  Walk-in, no appointment necessary |

You can also order kits online through the Gov.Uk home order channel: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

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If you cannot use the online service, call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines). Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm. 119 provides support in 200 languages.

**How to stay safe and help prevent the spread over the Christmas period.** There is a risk you could catch or pass on COVID-19, even once you are fully vaccinated. There are easy and effective actions we can take to protect ourselves and others around us. Stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

* **Got COVID-19 symptoms? Stay at home and take a PCR test.** You can book a test at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested> or by calling 119.
* **No symptoms? Take regular lateral flow tests.** Many people who become infected with the virus don’t have symptoms but can still infect others. Test twice a week and before spending time in crowded and enclosed spaces, or before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19. Report your result at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> and if positive, self-isolate immediately and take a PCR test.
* **Get vaccinated and boosted**. You can book online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/> or find out about local walk-in vaccination sites in Bolton at <https://www.boltonccg.nhs.uk/patient-zone/coronavirus>
* Work from home if you can
* Wear face coverings in crowded places and on public transport
* Use the NHS COVID19 App and check in to venues when you go out
* Meet outside, or open windows and doors for indoor visitors
* Wash your hands with soap regularly, and for at least 20 seconds
* To protect others we also recommend you limit contact with anyone who would be at higher risk of severe illness if they were to be infected with COVID-19

**Where can I find out about COVID-19 vaccination in Bolton?** The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are safe and effective. They give you the best protection against COVID-19.Find the latest information about who can get the vaccination at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/who-can-get-the-vaccine/>

Full the latest details about local walk-in vaccination sites in Bolton at <https://www.boltonccg.nhs.uk/patient-zone/coronavirus>

**Test and Trace Support Payments** If a person is asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and is on a low income, unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, they may be entitled to a payment of £500 from their local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This now applies to parents/ carers who cannot work from home and will lose income by self-isolating or staying at home to care for the child. Further details are available via:

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/coronavirus-support-1/test-trace-payments>

**Further Information.** Further information about Covid-19 is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Return to school in January**. Year 11 will return on Thursday 6th January and consenting students will be tested first thing using LFDs. Other year groups will be taught online and are invited to book a testing slot using: <https://stjosephshorwich.schoolcloud.co.uk>

**Online Learning**. Here is a video to support students with on line learning for 6th Jan. <https://youtu.be/J5W2y13KtwA> Please ensure your child watches it and check that they can log on to RM Unify. We are hoping online learning will just be for a day, but we are braced and prepared with contingency plans so that we are ready I the Government make any announcements over Christmas. If you are struggling with ICT equipment please Contact your HoY if so that we can support you.

Wishing you a restful Christmas and a chance to spend time with the special people in your life. Remember, the happiest memories are usually not the expensive ones but are made by spending quality time being together.

**Take care and God Bless!**

**Mr T McCabe**