18th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Many thanks to parents and carers for your patience as we all continue to overcome Covid disruption. Yesterday 32 new Covid cases were identified and on one day last week we had 14 staff off school due to the impact of Covid. Clearly, the impact of the virus will still be seen for some time but I would like to thank parents and carers for their patience as staff have covered for absent colleagues in order to prevent having to close school to any students. During this time it might take us a little longer to get back to parents and carers than normal but normal service will be resumed when isolators start to return.

This letter contains information from the DfE on changes to the isolation period and the roll out of 2nd vaccines for 12-18 year olds.

**Changes to the self-isolation period for those who test positive for COVID-19**

This change came into effect in England on Monday 17 January and applies to all positive cases, regardless of vaccination status.

People who are self-isolating with COVID-19 have the option to reduce their isolation period after 5 full days if they test negative with an LFD test on both day 5 and day 6 and they do not have a temperature. For example, if they test negative on the morning of day 5 and the morning of day 6, they can return to their education or childcare setting immediately on day 6.

The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 of the self-isolation period, and the second must be taken the following day. All test results should be reported to NHS Test and Trace.

If the result of either test is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.

The new rules also apply to people who are already isolating – so if someone was already isolating before Monday 17 January, they can take LFD tests on day 5 and 6 and if they are both negative and they have no temperature they can end their isolation.

Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests or anyone who continues to have a temperature will need to complete the full 10-day period of self-isolation.

**Update on progress of the 12 to 15 year old COVID-19 vaccination programme**

We are expecting Phase 2 of the in-school vaccination programme for 12 to 15 year olds to begin at St Joseph’s on 7th February 2022. More information will follow. Vaccines remain our best weapon against this virus. Nationally we have seen an uptake increase to 50.6%, however there is substantial variation between regions. Therefore, whilst waiting for confirmation of an on-site visit from a SAIS team, parents are encouraged to book out-of-school vaccinations for their child, if aged 12 or over, through the [NHS booking system](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/?utm_source=13%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19). This can be done for students who missed out on their first vaccine due to being in the 12 week window of having contracted Covid or for those who would like to seek a 2nd dose as soon as possible.

**The benefits of the vaccine are clear:**

• It is estimated that a 60% vaccine uptake among healthy 12 to 15 year olds will reduce confirmed cases of COVID-19 in this group in the period up to 31 March 2022 by 33%. This equates to a reduction of 110,000 school days absent in this age group due to confirmed COVID-19 cases.

• Research shows that those who do become infected 3 weeks after receiving one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or AstraZeneca vaccine are between 38% and 49% less likely to pass the virus on to their household contacts than those who are unvaccinated.

Please see the guidance on [COVID-19 vaccination: resources for schools and parents for further information and resources on the vaccination programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools/?utm_source=13%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).

**Take care and God Bless!**

**Mr T McCabe**