

# WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

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Wednesday 30 December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

We hope that you were able to enjoy Christmas this year, albeit like so many events and celebrations in 2020 a very different experience to normal. Many of you will have had to change your plans at the last moment because of the new rules the government needed to bring so close to Christmas.

The Trust promised to write to you on December 30 with an update on its plan to carry-out rapid-result Lateral Flow Device Tests on staff, Wootton Upper School pupils and Kimberley College students. We have worked hard over the holiday to put in place plans to make this possible.

We would like to thank those parents/carers [more than twenty] who have *so far* volunteered to help us in this task. We have been genuinely moved by these generous offers of support. Similarly, we would like to thank the staff who have been very quick to volunteer to help us to do this. We know that we need a large number of helpers to enable us to complete the process, so we would still welcome additional offers of support. If you can help please email: [covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk)

We are expecting an announcement from the government later today related to the start of the spring term: it is *likely* that this announcement may require us to modify our plans for next week. There is much speculation that the arrangements for secondary schools and sixth form colleges will be changed.

Nonetheless we are expecting:

- ❖ Lateral Flow Device testing kits and PPE to be delivered to the school and college next Monday;
- ❖ to start testing as soon as possible, after staff and volunteers have completed the training the Department for Education DfE and the Department for Health and Social Care have informed us will be published at some point this week;

**For every group, testing is voluntary, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged by the DfE and by the Trust to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within the school and college.**

Initially, we ask that that you indicate if you would wish for your child to take part in the mass testing that will be available at Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College by completing the survey using the link below.

[Click here to give consent](#)

Following the expected announcement later today and the Trust receiving updated guidance, Mrs McMorn and Mr Detheridge will be sending out their own letters about next steps, asking parents/carers to complete a Registration Form and return it as soon as possible so they know how many testing kits will be required overall. We are asking staff to complete the survey and subsequent Registration Form and to return to us as soon as possible.

## Thank you Mrs McMorn and Dr Mackay

Up until Christmas Eve, Mrs McMorn and Dr Mackay were contacting the parents/carers of all children and young people identified as close contacts of those Wootton Upper School pupils and Kimberley College students who had received positive test results.

On everyone's behalf we would like to thank them for all their work. Mrs McMorn and Dr Mackay told me that it takes approximately three hours to complete the notification process for each positive test result. Up until midnight on December 23 there were twelve positive cases [four at the school, six at the college and two members of staff]. Since Christmas Eve, we have been notified of a further nine cases [four at the school, four at the college and a member of staff]. Therefore, you will appreciate just how much of their holiday was taken up with this responsibility.

During the autumn term [sixteen weeks], the school had only one confirmed case and the college five cases; the increase in confirmed cases in the first ten days of the Christmas Holiday is very significant. It mirrors what is happening across the country as a whole and more locally what is happening in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

We know that the new Covid strain is much more transmissible. Public Health England analysis shows that contacts of people with the new Covid variant are 54% more likely to develop the virus. However, the study also showed that the mutant strain does not appear likely to cause more severe disease or higher death rates.

**Six of the nine positive Covid-19 tests of Wootton Upper School pupils come from children who live in Wootton.** One positive test came from a child who lives in Kempston; the final two positive test results from children who live in Marston Moretaine.

There are 228 Wootton Upper School children who live in Wootton, 186 children live in Marston, 153 live in Cranfield and 146 live in Kempston.

We need to work out why more Wootton Upper School children who live in Wootton seem to be catching Covid-19 than children who live in other villages [e.g. zero cases in Cranfield]. One *possibility* is that children are not social distancing and wearing face coverings on their way to and from school.

At Kimberley College, students are drawn from a larger catchment area; no village/town has a significantly higher number of positive test results than others. [*The highest number of positive test results for any village/town is two: Wootton, Kempston and Wilstead*].

All of us need to continue to reinforce the key messages of hands – face – space. When the school and college re-open we will re-visit our key messages with staff and with students and pupils.

In the meantime... PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON AS YOU CAN IF YOUR CHILD TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID 19 by using the [covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk) email address. Thank you.

## Welcome to new staff

We welcome the following staff to the Trust on January 1 2021

- ❖ Mrs S. Chick re-joins WAT as Assistant Head [Director of Science]
- ❖ Miss N Bailey joins the SEND Team of Teaching Assistants
- ❖ Miss C Harrington joins the History Department
- ❖ Mr S Mercer joins the Science Department [Physics Specialism]
- ❖ Mrs C Puchalski joins the Drama Department
- ❖ Mr S Wade joins the PE Department

We hope that all of the above colleagues will be very happy working at Wootton and Kimberley. We are confident that they will very quickly be made to feel very welcome by our community.

## **Congratulations to Mr and Mrs Graham**

Mrs Graham, Head of Drama, started her maternity leave at the end of the autumn term. Very early on Christmas morning, Mrs Graham gave birth to a son. We are sure you will want to join with the Trust in offering your congratulations to the family.

## **Free School Meals**

We are aware some parents/carers have experienced difficulty accessing the Free School Meals vouchers they are entitled to for the holiday period.

Parents/carers with children/young people entitled to Free School Meals should have received an email informing them what they had to do. We know that in some instances these emails have gone into "junk email" accounts. If any other parents/carers entitled to Free School Meals have not been able to access their vouchers, we hope this information helps you. The email you should have received comes from the company administering the scheme, "*Black Hawk*".

We would like to thank Bedford Borough Councillor Louise Jackson for her help and support over the holiday in helping to support families to resolve this issue and also Councillor John Wheeler for his advice and support.

On behalf of everyone at the Trust, Directors, Governors and staff, may we wish all of you a very happy new year.

Yours sincerely



Michael Gleeson  
**Executive Principal**  
Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Academy Trust operates:  
Wootton Upper School & Arts College  
Kimberley 16-19 STEM College  
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