

# WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

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Monday 21 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

In the exceptional times we all find ourselves living through, we have got used to working differently; we are experienced in calling virtual meetings at short notice, sometimes late in the evening, as well as at the weekend and during holidays. Whilst we all look forward to a return to more normal ways of working we do recognize that these different ways of working are often necessary given the coronavirus pandemic where changes can be announced at short notice.

When we wrote to you at the end of last week Bedfordshire was in tier two, although we knew it was about to move into tier three on Saturday; on Saturday we learned that Bedfordshire would be one of the counties in Tier 4 from Sunday. The new variant appears to be up to 70% more infectious than the original COVID-19 strain. We know that in the East of England around 60% of cases are believed to be from the new strain.

Until last week, Wootton Upper School had just one recorded case of a positive test over sixteen weeks. Kimberley College had reported six cases amongst the student body in the same period.

Last Friday, we were notified of **four** new confirmed positive cases and on Sunday a further **four** positive cases. **Today we have been alerted to another case.** We can only conclude that the rapid acceleration in the number of cases is related to the new variant.

## **Notifying us of new cases**

Thank you for continuing to let us know if your child has received a positive test result. Please continue to use the dedicated email address: [Covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:Covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk)

You should notify us of new cases up until the end of Wednesday December 23 so we can let any close contacts know that they need to self-isolate. After that you should follow the advice you receive when you are notified of a positive test result by text. However, we will continue to monitor [Covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:Covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk) so we build up a picture of the level of infection in our school and college community.

## **Notifying parents/carers of positive cases**

Mrs McMorn and Dr Mackay are following guidance in contacting parents/carers of children and young people who are identified as close contacts of positive cases. In some instances, a parent/carer may get more than one notification with different dates as the end point for self-isolation. We know that this has confused some parents/carers.

**The reason for sending more than one text is that some children and young people have been identified as being close contacts with MORE than one pupil/student who has tested positive for COVID 19.** If this happens then parents/carers should work to the latest date as being the end point of self-isolation.

We hope that a new system being introduced in the Spring Term, with optional daily testing for children and young people over a seven-day period [ as an alternative to having to self-isolate] should reduce the numbers being mandated to self-isolate. *We will write to you with more details of this new system later in the holiday.*

### **Arrangements for the Spring Term**

This morning members of our Executive Leadership Team met to consider the arrangements for the first week of term with respect to Lateral Flow Testing starting in the first week of the Spring Term, on Monday 4 January. We have drawn up a provisional plan which we now need to test and reflect on it, in light of what happens over the next two weeks.

In our meeting we agreed that we would write to parents/carers on **Wednesday 30 December** with an update on how Lateral Flow Tests will operate for all pupils/students and staff at Wootton Upper School and at Kimberley College. The situation is a rapidly changing one and therefore plans may need to be amended in light of the situation at the time. Therefore, please look out for a letter and other information on that day.

In the letter of Wednesday 30 December we will revisit the arrangements for remote learning; we have already given you some information about how teaching and learning will be organized in that week, including how remote learning will be scheduled.

Whilst the government has now stated that schools/colleges may hold an additional training day on Monday 4 January to prepare, we are NOT planning to do so. Therefore, all the children and young people who are expected, or encouraged, to be in school/college that day can expect their first day back to remain Monday 4 January.

In this letter we are updating you on which pupils and students should be in school/college from Monday 4 January, in light of the guidance issued by the DfE:

- **All** Year 11 and Year 13 learners
- **Any** Year 12 learners taking their A Level Mathematics in **June 2021**; these children and young people *should* attend all Mathematics lessons that week. *These students will all be taking A Level Further Mathematics in Year 13.*
- **Any** children or young people who are entered for any **external** BTEC vocational exam which takes place between Monday 4 January and Friday 8 January *should attend the lessons in the subject[s] they have exams in that week.*
- **Any** children and young people described as “vulnerable” [**see below for definition**].
  
- **Any** children of key workers are welcome to come to school/college [**see below for definition**].

*Based on our survey over the weekend only seven parents/carers have identified themselves as key workers who want their children to attend school/college.*

This morning we started to think about the government’s request that we offer all staff and all students Lateral Flow Tests so that more pupils and students and more staff can remain in school/college rather than needing to self-isolate.

The government has promised more information; we have not received this additional guidance yet and therefore, we cannot share it with you.

In our letter next week, we will outline the arrangements we hope will be in place for Lateral Flow Testing from the week beginning Monday 4 January.

In the meantime, may we wish you a happy and safe Christmas.

Yours sincerely

Michael Gleeson  
**Executive Principal**  
Wootton Academy Trust

#### Definitions

#### **Vulnerable children and young people include those who:**

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:
  - children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services or in the process of being referred to children's services
  - adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
  - those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example, due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- other children and young people at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

#### **Critical workers are those who work in:**

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services (*including the justice system, religious staff, charities delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting*)
- Local and national government (*those who are involved in delivering the coronavirus response or essential public services*)
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services

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