



# LONGBENTON HIGH SCHOOL

9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

## **School closed to students Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December**

Schools received the following guidance yesterday afternoon (8<sup>th</sup> December) from the Department of Education, which I wanted to share with you as early as possible. It concerns arrangements for the end of term / track and trace for Covid over Christmas and therefore has implications for our own end of term next week. I know that many of you have been concerned about the risks of contracting the virus in the final week of term when so many of you will be planning to meet relatives and wider family and will be keen to see the guidance in full:

### ***End of term planning***

*"We know that school and further education leaders, teachers and staff, as well as nurseries and childminders, have worked tirelessly over the last term. This has included their important role in contact tracing, to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the virus. We are aware that this has led to additional work over weekends and holidays and we are incredibly grateful for this.*

*We recognise the challenges of this responsibility at the end of term. Public Health England has agreed a 6 day window after the final day of teaching in which schools and further education providers are asked to remain contactable so they can assist with contact tracing where necessary. This will allow enough time for positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in the education setting to be traced. We are clear that beyond 6 days after the final day of teaching, school and further education staff are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing. It is also likely that the need to support the tracing process will reduce dramatically over the course of the 6 days as the majority of cases should be identified earlier in the week."*

### ***End of term – advice for schools***

*"To ensure that staff get the time off they need and deserve, schools may wish to use an INSET day, making Friday 18 December a non-teaching day and using the day for staff training, which could be delivered online. Where term would normally finish in the week commencing 21 December, schools may wish to consider adjusting term dates to make Friday 18 December the last day of term (which could be an INSET day) and bringing forward the start of term in January by the same number of days.*

*In all circumstances, teaching time must be made up at another point in the academic year. You should not limit attendance at school before Friday 18 December. It remains vital for all children to be in school up to the last day of teaching.*

*We recognise this communication has arrived with schools late in the term but would ask schools to be as helpful to parents as they can by sharing any changes to end of term arrangements as soon as possible, particularly where schools choose to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day. Your support with this is appreciated."*



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*“We recommend all schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:*

- *Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.*
- *For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.*
- *School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. Where a schools last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December.*

*For the first 6 days after the end of term, schools are not asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing may designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or email). The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline and PHE advice service are available to support with any queries you have about positive cases in your school.*

*Where pupils are required to self-isolate due to contact with a positive case after the first 6 days following the end of term, schools do not need to be informed about their absence until the first day of the new term.”*

### **End of term arrangements at Longbenton High School**

Therefore, I have made the decision that we will move our planned June 2021 INSET day to 18<sup>th</sup> December. This means that on June 25<sup>th</sup>, school will be open to all students as normal, but **school will be closed to students on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December. This means that our last day of term will now be Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December.**

I appreciate that this news has come very late and can only apologise for this; I hope this does not inconvenience families too much. We are of course now used to very late announcements from the government regarding schools, but it makes planning ahead very difficult. We could not foresee this announcement, given that the Department of Education have resisted calls nationally to move to remote learning in the last week of term for months.



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Our end of term arrangements will therefore be as follows. Lessons will continue as normal Periods 1-3 on Thursday. During period 4, students in Years 7-11 will be with their tutor for a remote end of term rewards assembly led by year leaders.

Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> December – last day of term		
Year group	Lunch	Finish time
Key Stage 3 / Years 7-9	12.15-12.45 as normal	1.45pm
Key Stage 4 / Years 10-11	Available to pick up at 1.15pm	1.15pm
Key Stage 5 / Years 12-13	Available at 12pm as normal	12.00pm

## Covid reporting over Christmas

As outlined in the government guidance above, SLT will be on call to deal with track and trace **up to Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December if your child tests positive for Covid**. The same processes apply as outlined in my letter last week (dated 4<sup>th</sup> December, which you can find [here](#)) regarding the information we need and how to get in touch with us after the end of term should you need to. It is also on our Covid guidance page on the website in the 'Parent Information' section here [here](#). **Please note that beyond this date, there will be no need to get in touch to alert us to any positive cases in your household as outlined above:** *"We are clear that beyond 6 days after the final day of teaching, school and further education staff are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing."*

I hope you can understand our decision to follow this government guidance, which means we can further protect students in the run up to Christmas and ensure that staff are not in a position where they are working on Christmas Eve.

Yours faithfully,

Kelly Holbrook

Headteacher