

Dear parents/ carers,

I hope you have all enjoyed a happy, holy and restful Christmas break and I wish you all a happy new year.

In the final newsletter of last term, I said I would pass on any updates to you as soon as possible, regarding impact of the COVID variant, Omicron. The DfE sent an email to all school leaders yesterday morning. I have summarised the main messages below.

Main messages from 02.01.22 DfE update:

Maintaining face-to-face education

Enabling face-to-face education and childcare is the absolute priority.

Vaccinations/ Booster

The Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, said *'it is also vital that all of us – including parents, carers, teachers, early years professionals, eligible students and everyone working in education and childcare – go out as soon as they possibly can to get the booster jab, to protect the NHS, protect our way of life, and protect education and childcare.'*

Staff testing

All staff are strongly encouraged to test twice a week using an LFD test and to report all results to [the NHS](#) and to their setting.

Plea for former teachers to come back temporarily

A plea has been made for any former teacher who can do so to come back to the classroom [to sign up](#) to offer temporary help.

Workforce shortages

If operational challenges caused by workforce shortages in make delivery of face-to-face teaching impossible, we are asked to make available teaching and non-teaching workforce to maximise on-site education for as many pupils as possible while we flexibly deliver provision either on-site or remotely to some pupils.

This should only be on a short-term measure and settings should return to full-time in-person attendance for all pupils as soon as practicable.

Information on the changes to the self-isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason.

Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a

high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8. Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation.

Daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19

People who are fully vaccinated, or children aged between 5 and 11 years, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.

Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19, and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. They can continue to attend an education or childcare setting while waiting for the PCR result. If the test is positive, they should follow the stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection?utm_source=2%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

The current requirements on remote education continue to remain in place

As pupils return to education and childcare settings following the holiday period, the current requirements for remote education continue to remain in place. St Mary's remote education plan was updated at the end of last term and can be viewed at:

<https://www.chorleystmarys.lancs.sch.uk/remote-learning/remote-learning-overview>

Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for at-risk 5 to 11 year olds, and booster doses for at-risk 12 to 15 year olds and all 16 to 17 year olds

On Wednesday 22 December, the government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed. The NHS is working through updated guidance and will set out how this is going to be operationalised shortly.

In response to the threat from the Omicron variant, the JCVI advised that a Pfizer booster vaccine should be offered to:

- children aged 12 to 15 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of immunosuppressed individuals, and those who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose
- all young people aged 16 to 17 years old
- The NHS will communicate how eligible children and young people can get their boosters shortly.

Please also see link below to document from the DfE which gives specific guidance to parents and carers and was updated yesterday.

What parents and carers need to know about - early years providers, schools and colleges Updated 2 January 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/step-4-update-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges>

We look forward to seeing the children and back at school tomorrow refreshed and ready to start the new term and new year. It is going to be a challenging few weeks ahead for us all to navigate but we will do our very best to keep face-to-face education going. And, of course, we will keep you fully informed and share guidance with you, as and when we receive it.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Smyth

Headteacher.