



From the Headmaster: Weekly Update – 10/12/21

Dear Parents

Many thanks, firstly, to junior school parents for your support with the online learning programme through this week. I can confirm that the junior school will reopen physically on Monday for the last week of term. I acknowledge that the news of this week's closure was unwelcome to many of you but I have to reiterate that there was no realistic alternative: by the close of play on Friday, a total of 95 junior school pupils were absent from school, 90% of whom had either tested positive or were awaiting confirmation of positive status, having tested positive on lateral flow. Six members of staff were also obliged to isolate, having tested positive.

We are reviewing what we can do to reduce the risk of further outbreaks in the junior school. Possible responses may include the continued use of bubbles, the requirement for older pupils to wear masks in certain situations and for all pupils to take weekly lateral flow tests. Whilst none of these measures are mandatory, I think that most of you would want us to err on the side of caution to minimise the possibility of further periods of physical closure.

The position in the senior school is currently stable (fewer than 15 cases) but I would remind parents that pupils are still required to self-test twice weekly and inform us immediately in the event of a positive result. There is currently some anecdotal evidence of complacency in this matter, and I would urge parents to ensure that the twice weekly tests actually happen and that pupils retain the electronic NHS receipts which they receive following submission of results.

Senior school parents should also remember that remote attendance at lessons is exclusively reserved for those who are well but self-isolating for COVID reasons. Pupils who are ill should rest at home in order to return to school as soon as possible, at which point teachers will support them in catching up on missed work.

Whilst the prognosis is less positive than was the case several weeks ago it is important to remember that things were much worse this time last year, prior to the second lockdown and the national vaccination programme. As things stand, there are no plans to close any part of the school next term and we intend to conclude this term without the cancellation of major events. We have also decided to conduct the 11+ entry exam remotely to avoid the necessity of bringing 425 pupils from different primary and prep schools on to the school

premises in the week before pupils return.

On a much brighter note, it was a genuine delight to see the senior school production of Grease this week. This was the first time for more than a year that we have been able to accommodate parents at a drama performance. Congratulations to Ms Maher, her colleagues and all the cast for an evening of wonderful entertainment. We look forward to the Winter Concert and the annual Carol Service at St Mary's Church next week.

With best wishes to you all

Richard Russell
Headmaster
