



14 January 2022

Dear Parent / Carer,

### Parental Update 16

Christmas now seems a long way off and school life is back into as much normality as COVID will allow: students are taking part in clubs, practices, rehearsals and other activities before during and after school, all in as safe a manner as possible. Our Year 11 students are getting ready for the mocks, then the final run-in to the real GCSEs, whilst we have been working on logos and designs for each of our Houses – we hope to be able to share these soon.

#### COVID Changes

The government has announced that there are some additional changes around testing and isolation. These include:

- **Confirmatory PCR testing:** following a positive result on a lateral flow device (LFD) will be temporarily suspended from Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January. This means that for all education and childcare settings, staff and students who have tested (either at home or through ATS) and reported a positive LFD result will no longer be advised to get a confirmatory PCR test.

This change is informed by public health advice. With high COVID-19 rates, the risk of a positive LFD result being false is very small. We therefore don't need to ask people to do a confirmatory PCR unless they:

- have symptoms (in which case they need to follow the stay at home guidance, self-isolate and order a PCR test)
  - wish to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment
  - have been advised to take a PCR test because they are in a clinically vulnerable group
  - have been advised to do so as part of a research or surveillance programme
- **Length of Isolation:** from **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January**, people who are self-isolating with COVID-19 will have the option to reduce their isolation period after 5 full days if they test negative with a lateral flow device (LFD) test on both day 5 and day 6 and they do not have a temperature. For example, if they test negative on the morning of day 5 and the morning of day 6, they can return to their education or childcare setting immediately on day 6. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 of the self-isolation period, and the second must be taken the following day. All test results should be reported to NHS Test and Trace. If the result of either of their tests is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest. Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests or anyone who continues to have a temperature will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation.

## Reading

We recognise how important reading is for young people and so I thought I would share a few of the initiatives we have in place to support and develop reading in school. Each week we extend one of our form periods, on a rota, to allow for extended form reading. This involves form tutors leading the reading of a book with the form class, followed by discussion about the book. We were able to buy a stock of new, interesting and modern reading books suitable for each range, which seem to be going down well with the students.

In addition, we also have a variety of reader support schemes for those who find reading harder and also for our exceptionally strong readers – these are delivered by staff or reading mentors provided by staff and older students. This also ties in with us trying to widen access in school to our library. Within departments, each subject has thought carefully about identifying suitable and relevant reading to support learning and literacy within their curriculum area.

## Year 8 Retreats

Next week it is the turn of our Year 8 students to attend their retreats. Parents should have received information regarding the arrangements for these. The retreats are to be held at Lowe House and students will attend in the School House groups:

- Monday 17th January - Mount Carmel Crusaders 8J and 8B
- Tuesday 18th January – Team Champion 8O and 8D
- Wednesday 19th January - West Park Wonders 8H and 8L
- Thursday 20th January - Notre Dame Raiders 8S and 8N

## Year 11 Mock Interviews

The Year 11 Mock Interviews will take place after school from 3.45pm – 5.45pm on **Tuesday 25th & Wednesday 26th January 2022** via Microsoft Teams. School IT will create a new 'Interview Room' team that your son/daughter will be invited to join 24 hours prior to their interview, this team will be closed as soon as the mock interviews have been completed. If your son/daughter is unable to access Microsoft Teams at home, please contact school asap and we will arrange for them to stay behind after school for their interview.

## Parents' Evenings (early finishes for all students)

Thank you to our Year 8 Parents for attending the meetings this week. Next week we have our Year 11 Parents' Evening. Then the week after (27<sup>th</sup> January) is our Year 9 event.

Appointments run from 2:00pm-4:00pm then 4.30pm-6.30pm and will be online.

Can I remind parents that, as usual, these are compressed days i.e. the students still have 5 shorter lessons whilst lunch and break are combined so that **all students finish at 1.30pm on these days** (if required, students are permitted to remain and work in the dining room for the buses that will run as normal).

## Year 11 Mocks and Reports

All Year 11 parents should have received a copy of the Year 11 mock exam timetable which begins on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January. You should also have received a range of information from Mrs Mulhall to help support your child ahead of these exams. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the year team or subject teachers. You should also have received Year 11 full reports. I know these come some time after the mock exams in mid-November. As way of background to this, several years ago, parents received an Assessment Sheet after the November mocks, these are produced quite quickly, with the full report coming much later in the year. Many parents, however,

said this wasn't helpful and so the full report (which takes longer to produce and check) was brought forward.

**Forthcoming Events (items in bold indicate a change to normal day)**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>: Year 8 retreats at Lowe House

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January: Year 9 (girls) football festival after school

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January: Year 11 Parents' Evening (online): all students finish at 1.30pm**

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January: Year 11 Mock interviews (3-45 to 5-45pm)

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January: Year 11 mock interviews (3-45 to 5-45pm)

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January: Year 9 Parents' Evening (online): all students finish at 1.30pm**

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January: Year 11 mock exams start (for 2 weeks)

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February: school closes for half term

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February: School re-opens after half term

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February – Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March: Years 7-10 Assessments

**And finally...**

It has been a relief to see levels of absence in staff reduce this week from around 15 staff each day to around 8, easing the burden on colleagues and allowing for more consistency for the students. Dare we hope there is a slither of light at the end of this COVID tunnel?

Have a good weekend.

Yours sincerely,

**Andrew Rannard**  
Headteacher