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Dear Parents

Once again, a happy New Year to you all.

Christmas now seems a distant memory. In the Catholic tradition, however, the Christmas season is not over until the Feast of the Epiphany, generally celebrated on 6 January or on the closest Sunday to the feast day. The Feast of the Epiphany is a commemoration of the visit of the Magi, the three Wise Men, or the Three Kings, whoever they may have been and the gifts they presented. Their visit was important enough to record in the Gospel of Matthew. So at the end of this great season, what gift do we continue to present Him with? The best gift we can offer Jesus Christ is the gift of ourselves, our lives, our devotion.

I apologise for the length of this letter. Unfortunately, the guidance relating to COVID-19 has now changed. There are also a number of regular updates for this time of year.

If you are a Year 9 student you are approaching the point where half of your 11-16 education has been impacted by the pandemic. Many of our youngsters who came into school this week hardly remember life before COVID-19. For younger students, their secondary experience has been dominated by punctuated starts, masks, social distancing, a disproportionate number of cover lessons and a school life that toggles between physical and virtual classrooms. Trying to resume some form of normality is critical, given how many formative experiences young children have missed out on, but it is still not without huge challenges thanks to Omicron. Two years on from the start of the pandemic, if you end up self-isolating, education remains a stop-start affair. In school we continue to do our best to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

Tuesday's return to school was meant to be a fresh start in many ways – the start of a new year and a new term, instead our youngsters were greeted by our army of COVID testers. Managing this operation was not without its logistical and operational challenges. I would like to thank parents for working with us through this and students who behaved with the utmost maturity. Well done all round! There were a small number of students who did not attend school for a test, despite parental permission. If your child is in this category and the absence is unexplained we will contact you. Your child may be asked to self-administer a home-based LFD test in school.

On Tuesday and Wednesday all students were provided with an LFD testing kit, in the current climate I cannot stress enough how important it is that students test regularly at home. It is very important that all students are testing on a Sunday and Wednesday every week so that we can keep our community as safe as it can be.

Reporting LFD Test Results

From January, we have changed the way to log your child's LFD test results. Currently, Test Register is used, but parents of students in Years 7-11 are now able to use Classcharts to do this.

Please see the attached instruction on how you do this; this can also be found [via this link](#) on the school website. You are only able to log LFT results on the parent account, so if you have yet to log into your account, please email classcharts@oaklandscatholicschool.org and request your log in credentials.

Students in the Sixth Form can continue to use Test Register.

Again, it is very important that all students are testing on a Sunday and Wednesday every week so that we can keep our community as safe as it can be.

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Returning to school following a positive test

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.

Students may now take an LFD test 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. If both these test results are negative, and your child does not have a high temperature, self-isolation ends after the second negative test result and your child can return to school.

Temporary removal of the need to take a PCR test

Confirmatory PCR tests following a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test result are to be temporarily suspended from Tuesday 11 January. This will mean that anyone who receives a positive LFD test result will be required to self-isolate immediately and will not be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. If your child takes an LFD test and it is positive, please ensure you have seen the test and that the results have been uploaded to the NHS site. We may ask for a copy of the confirmation email from the NHS.

All absences need to be reported to school. It is important that you leave a message on the absence line 023 9224 8053. The line is open 24/7 so please leave a message as soon as you know your child will be absent from school. Or you can email attendance@oaklandscatholicschool.org at any time. If you need to speak to a member of the Attendance team, please indicate this in your message and they will call you back as soon as possible. Please be familiar with our school processes for reporting absence, which can be found on the school website. There is now an additional facility on Class charts please see the information later in this letter.

Vaccinations for 12-15 Year olds

The JCVI and Government have agreed that children aged 12-15 years old can now receive a second dose of COVID-19 vaccination through the school age immunisation service. The NHS immunisation team would like to pass on their thanks to the support parents gave for the first dose of the vaccine. The immunisation team will deliver the second dose in school on Monday 28th February and Tuesday 1st March.

This time the Immunisation Team are planning to use e-consent, as they do for the other vaccinations in the school age immunisation programme. Please find attached a separate letter explaining the immunisation programme for children in Years 7-11. A copy can also be found [here](#) on the website.

Parents only need to submit 1 form per child. If an error is made when completing a form please contact the Immunisation Team to correct the error, rather than submit another form. Should parents not know their child's NHS number they can use this link to find it: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/find-nhs-number/>

The completion date for all consent forms is 10.00am on Thursday 17th February.

Wearing of Face Masks

You will recall that in my letter at the beginning of this week that I highlighted the change announced by the DfE on 2nd January 2022 with regard to staff and students having to wear face masks in all indoor school areas, including classrooms. There are still a number of students who are not arriving at school with face masks. Again, I ask parents/carers to ensure that students arrive in school with a face mask ready to wear indoors throughout the school day. Bus companies, providing school transport for students, have also asked me to remind you that students must wear face masks when using a school bus or other public transport to get to and from school.

Attendance

From Monday 10th January you will be able to report your child absent from school using Classcharts, please see attached guidance, which can also be found [via this link](#) on the school website.

You will also be able to see your child's attendance in Classcharts, however, this will not be 'live', as there is a 24 hour delay.

Staffing Levels

Keeping schools open is in the best interest of students and families. However, we have to be realistic in terms of what we can achieve. I already had a number of staff absent as a result of COVID-19. Sadly, your child may already have had a number of covered lessons since the start of term.

I am sure you are aware of the media reports lamenting the supply of external cover teachers. The Government has already warned that workplace absence could reach 25%. If a point arises where the school does not have sufficient staff for each class, then it will be necessary to send students home switching to online learning, this may happen at short notice. This will very much be a last resort, if this action is necessary then our priority will be to maintain classes for Year 11 and Year 13.

Year 9 Options Evening

This event for Year 9 parents, carers and students was due to be held on Thursday 27 January and was due to be a live event in school. Moving it to an online remote event will compromise the content so therefore we have rescheduled this to Tuesday 1st March, when we hope that the national COVID picture will have improved.

Lost Property

Over the last term we accumulated a significant volume of lost property, the vast majority of which is not named and unclaimed items have now been stored for some time. The replacement cost of these items to parents amounts to many hundreds of pounds. If you are aware your child has lost an item please send them to Student Services. After Friday 21 January all lost property from last term will either be sold on as second hand uniform or donated to charity.

CAMHS Survey

Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are running a short survey to gather the views around why some parents and carers do not feel confident to support their children with their mental health. If you would like to take part, please follow this link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WTEQKG/>

GCSE and A Level Certificates (2021 Exam Season)

Following the cancellation of the Presentation of Certificates evening, we will make the certificates available for collection from the White House Reception between 8.30am and 4.00pm, during term time from Tuesday 11 January, for those students who are no longer at Oaklands.

For students who are currently attending Sixth Form, the certificates will be taken to the Sixth Form at various points during the week commencing 10th January for distribution. Any certificates remaining after that time will be stored in the White House Reception for collection during school hours.

If certificates are to be collected on the student's behalf, then we must ask that we are made aware of who will be collecting them by e-mail to certificates@oaklandscatholicschool.org and that ID is provided.

We are unable to post certificates as they are irreplaceable documents.

Once again, I apologise for the length of this letter. In addition to the usual information required by parents at this time of year, you can see we are responding to a changing situation and it is important that you are kept up-to-date.

Thank you for your continued prayers support.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn
Headteacher