Date: Thursday, 2nd September 2021

**Re: Arrangements for the start of the new Academic Year.**

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you have had a relaxing summer and enjoyed time with your family and maybe even managed some time away on a holiday break.

As we approach the start of the new term, we are excited to welcome everyone back into school next week as we kickstart the new academic year; we are particularly looking forward to welcoming our new starters in year 7 alongside those joining us in Year 12 at our Bridgnorth 6th form.

At this time, we felt it was appropriate to send you some reminders regarding the start of the new academic year alongside further updates which have been communicated to all schools over the summer period. Please be assured that on students’ return to school, everything is in place to guarantee a smooth start to the academic year with plenty of time for any questions to be answered, we look forward to seeing everyone.

*At the end of this letter is a copy of Questions and Answers which have been provided by the NHS for parents in relation to how schools will move forward through the COVID pandemic, we hope you find these useful.*

1. **Resting and Re-Establishing opportunities in school.** Over the summer we have been working hard to plan for the new year and look to reintroduce the many ways of working, alongside opportunities for all students which were either changed or put on hold last year to ensure we were COVID secure. We are looking forward to reintroducing many clubs and activities, alongside giving students the opportunity to work with other students across all year groups. We will be sharing these experiences with you as we progress through the weeks ahead.
2. **COVID Updates**
   1. **Assisted Asymptomatic Onsite Testing.** As you are aware, we are offering onsite testing for all students at the start of the new term, this is supported by a staggered start for year groups as outlined below.

* Tuesday 7th September: Year 7 & Year 12 (6th form registration)
* Wednesday 8th September: Year 11 & Year 13
* Thursday 9th September: Year 8
* Friday 10th September: Year 9
* Monday 14th September: Year 10

Having now completed the planning for this, we are able to re-open the consent form (for any parents who have not yet provided consent) until midnight on Friday 3rd September, please click on the following link to complete the consent form.

<https://forms.office.com/r/CZ4xDa3xsb>

Students who have not received consent on arrival to school will be provided with home testing kits which they will be encouraged to use at the earliest opportunity.

* 1. **Further Information.** Information about the testing can be found on the school’s website <http://www.oldburywells.com/parent-information/covid-update>. Students will be tested in school on the first day of their return and then again within 3 to 5 days after; they will then be asked to test regularly at home.
  2. **Managing any positive cases in school.** The Q&A section at the end of this letter outlines government advice on the management of positive cases in school.
  3. **Use of face coverings in school.** Face coverings in school are no longer mandatory, although students who wish to wear a face covering at any time are free to do so; this now becomes a personal choice. If the use of a face covering would affect educational provision/opportunity, then a student may be asked to remove the covering for a short period of time.
* **Information for those students using School Transport.** All school transport will be running as usual from Tuesday, 7th September. The latest guidance from the Government says that face coverings are no longer mandatory but still advisory therefore it will now be down to the pupil’s own discretion. We will be continuing with the use of seating plans on our bus services and students will be informed of this on their return to school.

1. **Attendance.** School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that children attend school. All students are expected to be in school from their published start date and be on site by 8:40am where they will be greeted by staff on arrival.
2. **Arrival at school.** For the first few weeks of school, students will be directed to their outdoor meeting zones to be collected by their form tutor. For new students there will be plenty of staff available to direct them as required (note: Year 7 meeting zone is on the West Side). All students will attend a short assembly on arrival before spending time with their form tutor for an extended tutor period. *Year 7 students will be involved with induction activities throughout their first day to ensure they are prepared to follow their normal school timetable thereafter.*
3. **School Uniform and Equipment.** Students are expected to return to school in full school uniform and be fully equipped for all lessons. We have communicated expectations to students and families over recent months (particularly in relation to footwear and skirt length) and look forward to receiving parental support with this.
4. **School Canteen.** The school canteen will be fully operational from the start of term. Students should ensure they have credit on their accounts should they wish to access this. New starters will be supported with procedures in school.
5. **Visitors.** Visitors, including parents/carers are asked to continue to make an appointment through school Reception if wishing to visit in person. We will expect visitors to hand sanitise on entry and support our hygiene measures.

We will be providing all students with key information about how school changes will impact them on their arrival into school. The team are very excited to be welcoming our school community back and look forward to seeing everyone next week. Thank you as always for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

**Lee Tristham** (Headteacher)

**Questions and Answers. (From Deartment for Education [DfE])**

Pupils all over the country are beginning to return to schools and colleges after their summer breaks. For many pupils they will be returning with far fewer restrictions than when they left for the summer holidays.

Now that there are fewer restrictions, pupils will be able to experience a fuller education experience, including, access to more group activities, team sports, playing with friends, plays, and taking part in musical groups.

**There are three key changes:**

1. **Mixing and ‘bubbles’.** Keeping pupils or students in year group or classroom bubbles to reduce mixing is no longer a requirement.
2. **Tracing close contacts.** Close contacts will now be identified via NHS Test and Trace. Education settings are no longer expected to undertake contact tracing.

**3. Face coverings.** Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

**So, what will stay the same?**

Coronavirus hasn’t gone away so there will still be a need for schools, pupils and students to follow basic measures to avoid the spread of the virus:

1. Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools.
2. Ensuring good hygiene including frequent and thorough hand cleaning and the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.
3. Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes.
4. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.
5. Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

**What if there are a number of cases in one school or college?**

If there are a number of cases in one school or college, there is advice in place so teachers and staff know what to do. OWS has all these arrangements in place and form part of the schools continuing COVID Risk assessment.

Schools and colleges will do everything they can to minimise the impact on education and attendance, so might decide to introduce measures like:

* Increased testing
* Temporarily reintroducing face coverings and;
* Restricting attendance as a short-term measure and only as a last resort.

More information on the guidance we have issued to education settings is available at:[Contingency framework: education and childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings).

**NHS Q&A for Parents : Supporting students at secondary school or college: what you need to know**

* 1. **What COVID-19 measures will change at my child’s school or college?**

School or college will feel different as COVID-19 measures are relaxed.

* Bubbles and staggered start and finish times are no longer advised
* Young people can again have breaktimes and lunch together and take part in practical lessons and sports with other classes and year groups
* Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors
* Schools and colleges are advised to continue with regular handwashing, cleaning regimes, and to keep space well ventilated
* Rapid COVID-19 testing of secondary and college students should continue even for those who have been vaccinated.
* If your child is under 18 and 6 months and is identified as a close contact they will not need to self-isolate. Instead, they will be advised to take a PCR test
* Schools and colleges will have plans in place on what to do if anyone at school tests positive for COVID-19, or if additional measures are needed to be reintroduced for a limited period
* School or college is the best place for young people to be.
* With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, young people are now able to enjoy more freedom in their education.
* Being at school or college keeps young people’s education on track, so they can achieve their full potential, while also benefitting their mental and physical health and wellbeing.
* We’re doing everything we can to ensure young people can continue to attend school or college.
  1. **Should my child attend school or college?**
* Yes, attendance is mandatory. Public Health England and the Government’s Chief Medical & Scientific Officers agree that there is a very low risk and rate of severe illness in children and young people from COVID-19.
* The benefit of attending school or college continues to significantly outweigh the COVID-19 health risk to children and young people.
* If you have concerns, you should discuss these with your school or college and local authority so that your child is able to continue attending school or college.
  1. **Does my child need to continue doing COVID-19 tests?**
* Yes. Secondary school and college students should test when they return at the start of term. They are advised to take two on-site rapid COVID-19 tests (3-5 days apart), followed by twice weekly testing at home. The tests are easy to do and results come back within 30 minutes.
* You should report the results straight away, whether positive, negative or void, either online at gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by calling 119, free from your mobile or landline. If the test is positive then the person should also take a confirmatory PCR test and follow the latest government guidance.
* Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 have no symptoms and can spread it without knowing. Taking regular rapid tests will help give you peace of mind that your child is not spreading the virus without knowing.
  1. **What should I do if my child has COVID-19 symptoms?**
* If your child has any of the main COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste), they should not attend school or college and should stay at home.
* You should arrange for them to get a PCR test and tell your child’s school or college the test results.
* Your child should not attend school or college while you are waiting for test results, even if they are feeling better.
* If the test is negative, they should go to school or college as normal.
* If they test positive, they should continue to isolate and follow public health advice.
  1. **What happens if my child has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms?**
* If your child has been identified as a close contact, you will be advised that your child takes a PCR test.
* They will not have to self-isolate, unless they have a positive PCR test result.
* Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:
* they are fully vaccinated
* they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
* they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
* they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. They do not need to isolate while awaiting the PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.

* Staff who do not need to isolate, and children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend school, and have been identified as a close contact, should continue to attend school as normal.
* If none of the above applies, people should self-isolate [as per the instructions from NHS Test and Trace](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/if-youre-told-to-self-isolate-by-nhs-test-and-trace-or-the-covid-19-app/).
  1. **Will my child be vaccinated?**
* All 16 and 17-year-olds in England are now eligible for their first COVID-19 vaccine dose. Anyone in this age group can now find their nearest centre through the ‘grab a jab’ NHS online walk-in finder.
* The NHS will also contact 12 to 15 year-olds to receive the vaccine if they are previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable, have an underlying health condition or may live with an individual who is immunosuppressed.
  1. **If my child was previously considered as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), should they attend school or college?**
* Yes. All young people who were considered as CEV should have returned to school or college following the end of shielding measures on 1 April 2021.
* Further guidance will be given to parents of children who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable where necessary.
  1. **Will my child be required to continue any remote learning?**
* If your child is isolating due to a positive PCR test, schools and colleges will continue to implement high-quality remote education for students so that they can learn from home if they are well enough.
  1. **How will my child catch up on any lost learning?**
* There is lots of support available to help your child catch up on any lost learning over the course of the pandemic or to boost their wellbeing. To find out more about what’s on offer and who’s eligible, visit: https://educationcatchup.campaign.gov.uk/ or speak to your child’s school or college.
  1. **For further information and guidance:**
* To find out more about what to expect when pupils return to school or college in September, visit: gov.uk/backtoschool
* How to order a rapid COVID-19 test for asymptomatic testing: <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk>
* How to take a test: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/how-to-do-a-test-at-home-or-at-a-test-site/how-to-do-a-rapid-lateral-flow-test/>
* How to report your rapid COVID-19 test results:https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or call 119 (free from mobile or landline)
* How to order a PCR test if you or your child has COVID-19 symptoms: https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test