



Spalding High School

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Headmistress Mrs M Anderson B.Ed

22nd February 2022

Dear parents, carers and students,

Last night the Prime Minister outlined the “Living with Covid” Plan and schools have received new operational guidance. This will bring about important changes in the way we have operated within school and the community over the last two years. It will take time for us to adjust to the new ways of living and being in school, but we have faced Covid related challenges and changes with resilience and resourcefulness over the last two years and I have every confidence in the school community that this will continue to be the case as we now face the future.

It is vital to remember that we are still in a global pandemic, Covid is prevalent in our local community, and therefore we have a personal responsibility to look after each other. Today, our school infection rate stands at 0.61% but just two weeks ago, at the national peak of Omicron infection, it was 7.54%. We are not yet simply flicking a switch and returning to pre-pandemic life.

Covid continues to be a virus that we learn to live with, and the imperative is to reduce the disruption to young people and their education. Our core function is to ensure that high quality education can continue, be that face-to-face on site or remotely for those who are unwell with Covid. Throughout the duration of the pandemic, it has been our goal to keep students, their families and our staff as safe as possible whilst continuing to provide effective teaching and learning. This has not changed.

It has also been made clear to schools that we must have contingency plans and working Covid risk assessments in place in order to “scale up or down” in the event of local outbreaks or new variants emerging. Many of our Covid systems and processes will become dormant but there should we need to reinstate them. The new Contingency Plan and Risk Assessments will be shared with the school community early next week for consultation. We will notify you when they are available to view on the school website. Early next week we will provide students with an updated Health and Safety talk from Form Tutors.

Please read this letter very carefully and keep it for future reference. It is the first of two letters that we will send home this week. The second will be part of the School Bulletin on Thursday. The reason for this separation of information is that whilst we have an initial set of operating guidelines, not all of the Government and UKHSA guidelines have been updated yet and some will not be released until Thursday 24th February.

The key information thus far:

1. Basic Health and Hygiene messages.

Basic health and hygiene mitigations and messages remain unchanged. We are to maintain:

- Vigilance of how we are feeling and the symptoms of Covid. We must continue to be conscious of how we are feeling and not attend school if too unwell to do so. Please see the section 2 below for more details;
- Good respiratory hygiene - Catch it – Kill it – Bin it;
- Good hand hygiene and regular hand washing or sanitiser use. Our classrooms and buildings will keep the wall mounted hand sanitiser for students/staff to use;
- Enhanced cleaning - we will maintain our enhanced cleaning routines and daily Covid clean;
- Increased ventilation – we are to maintain background ventilation with windows ajar to create a free flow of fresh air and the CO2 monitors will remain.

2. Suspected Covid symptoms or a positive LFD/PCR.

The PM announced that with effect from Thursday 24th February, the legal requirement to self-isolate if you have a positive LFD or PCR will end. However, the information that we received from the Department for Education, following the PM's announcement states:

"From Thursday 24 February, the Government will remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days, and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days."

Schools will still be expected to follow national guidelines and to work proactively to minimise the risk of infection and spread of the virus. This includes the Stay At Home and UKHSA advice, which is not due to be published until Thursday. This is the information we aim to confirm in the School Bulletin on Thursday.

3. LFD and PCR tests.

LFD and PCR tests will continue to be available until 1st April. At that point, the Government will share plans for the next stage. Test kits are still available online and via local pharmacies. We have very limited stock in school and this morning it seems the kits we had on order have been cancelled and so are unable to supply students with any more kits. If this changes, we will notify students that they may be able to collect kits from school should they wish to continue regular testing. Alternatively, they remain available (free of charge) for online ordering or from pharmacies until 1st April.

4. Twice-weekly asymptomatic school testing via Teams.

The PM announced that as of yesterday, students and staff no longer need to complete twice weekly asymptomatic testing. Our Wednesday and Sunday test routines therefore **cease with immediate effect**. We do not expect students and staff to test tomorrow and upload their results to Teams. The Year Group Teams assignments will remain in place in case we need to use them again should we face an outbreak. The same applies to the ATS room.

I would like to thank students and staff for their commitment to the testing routines. You have been brilliant! I would also like to thank our Test Team of staff and parents who have run the ATS programme with efficiency, tenacity and good humour. You have been brilliant too!

Students might feel a little nervous about not testing regularly or, if a friend tests positive/has symptoms. Therefore, it is important for us to all remain vigilant of how we feel, and if we would like to carry on doing a test every now and then when we think we should, remember that kits continue to be available until 1st April.

5. Contact Tracing of Close Contacts for a positive case and 7 days of daily LFD testing.

As you know, we continue to let close contacts know that a friend has tested positive and then provide the test kits for them to follow government guidelines for daily testing for 7 days. This will continue for today and tomorrow. Last night, the PM announced that close contacts would no longer need to complete 7 days of daily LFD tests. This might worry students slightly and so you will see in section 6 below, we have asked that students do let friends know if they test positive. **As of Thursday 24th, the School will cease notification of close contacts.** Should students find that a friend has symptoms or tests positive, LFD kits are still available online or via pharmacies until 1st April. Again, it will take time to adjust to the new ways of living with Covid and if students/parents are worried, then please contact the School and speak to a member of the Pastoral Team.

6. Notification of a positive case or symptoms of Covid.

Students/parents should continue to notify school if a student displays the symptoms of Covid/tests positive. Notification should be made to enquiries@spaldinghigh.lincs.sch.uk. Students/parents and carers should use this email address to notify the School and not personal email accounts of individual staff nor the Teams LFD Assignment (which is being decommissioned). Using this email address ensures that the message is received and circulated to the correct staff. Students/parents no longer need to provide school with a list of close contacts (see section 5 above) but we would encourage students to let friends know that they have symptoms/tested positive so that they can be vigilant too.

We are expecting further information/advice from the UKHSA on Thursday 24th and will update the school community when we have received that. The Government continues to advise all staff and eligible students to take up the offer of the vaccine, which has now been extended to 11 year olds.

7. Work for students who are off school due to Covid.

We have limited information on this issue at the moment, other than that for the time being schools will continue to use an X attendance code for Covid related absences and that we will continue to set high quality work to be completed at home when the student is feeling well enough to do so.

8. Face Coverings/masks.

The most up to date national advice for face coverings/masks was published on 27th January and continues to advise people *“to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.”* We continue to be of the mind that this describes our corridors and stairwells at lesson change. However, **the wearing of face coverings/masks becomes a matter of personal choice in all areas of the school with immediate effect.** If students have fabric face coverings they should not dispose of them quite yet as this is one of the mitigations that may be scaled up should we see outbreaks or new variants. Students and staff should not pass comment to each other on this matter. We all have varying opinions on face coverings and we expect the school community to respect an individual’s personal choice.

We will continue to share information and changes to procedures over the next few days as more detail is provided by the relevant government departments and agencies. As I said at the start of this letter, it will take time to adjust; if students/parents would like to speak to a member of the Pastoral Team about any worries or concerns, please contact us on enquiries@spaldinghigh.lincs.sch.uk. I would also like to continue to reassure our entire school community that the Governors and staff remain committed to keeping our students safe and with continued access to high-quality education at all times.

Yours sincerely



M K Anderson
Headmistress