

01 November 2021

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Enhanced COVID measures in school

Following my end of term update letter sent on the 22nd October, I am writing with further details of some additional steps we are taking to help prevent transmission of COVID in school.

By way of some context, these enhanced measures follow a steep rise in cases across West Berkshire and especially among school-aged children. Whilst there have been no changes to national guidelines for schools, these local measures, some of which are additional to those outlined in my previous letter, have been decided based on advice from West Berkshire Council and the Berkshire West Health Protection Board. Their recommendations were outlined during the half term break in a letter sent to all Headteachers and were discussed at a virtual meeting I attended last Friday.

Of course, an important part of the considerations when deciding these measures, has been ensuring that high quality education is maintained as far as possible. Therefore, the measures outlined below, are intended to balance between students' learning and ensuring we are doing everything possible to reduce the risk of transmission.

The immediate health risks of COVID-19 infection for children and young people are low. Schools, including John O'Gaunt, remain open and safe to attend. Therefore, unless unwell or self-isolating, current government guidance remains that school attendance is mandatory.

The enhanced measures at JOG are as follows:

- Continue the use of face coverings in all indoor communal areas (unless exempt) for staff, students, and visitors. Face coverings should continue to be used on public transport and dedicated transport to school
- Visitors to school will be allowed if the visit is deemed to be essential and conducting it online or postponing it would not be a viable option
- Any student or member of staff who has a household member test positive for COVID-19 should take a **daily lateral flow test (LFD) for 7 days**, in addition to taking a one-off PCR test. Anyone who is exempt from self-isolation (those aged under 18 or adults who are fully vaccinated) who tests negative and is not showing symptoms, **can continue to attend school during this period of daily LFD testing**
- Any student or member of staff who is identified as a close contact of a positive case via NHS Test and Trace should take a **daily lateral flow (LFD) test for 7 days**, in addition to taking a one-off PCR test. Anyone who is exempt from self-isolation (those aged under 18 or adults who are fully vaccinated) who tests negative and is not showing symptoms, **can continue to attend school during this period of daily LFD testing**

- We will review risk assessments on an ongoing basis for trips, visits and events and decide on a case-by-case basis if they are safe to proceed. These decisions will be based on assessing the risks associated with COVID transmission and the educational benefits of allowing the event to go ahead. At present after-school clubs, fixtures and some planned events are unaffected, but **we will be reviewing these daily** and some have already been withdrawn. We will communicate to relevant parties affected by any of these decisions in due course
- Assemblies will continue to be run via Teams as far as possible. Should they need to go ahead in-person for relevant educational purposes, then they will not be in mixed year groups as far as possible
- Families should continue to take a Lateral Flow Device test every Sunday and Wednesday as per previous guidelines
- Routines for hand-sanitising and cleaning classroom spaces at the start and end of every lesson will continue, as will measures around additional cleaning across the site and extra ventilation where possible
- We will continue to encourage social distancing where possible (both in and out of school) as well as limiting contact mixing where practicable. However, at this stage we are not intending to reintroduce 'bubbles' or formal social distancing measures in classrooms

Public Health advice remains that vaccination is an important part of helping to reduce the transmission from COVID-19 and they encourage everyone to attend for their vaccination (1st and 2nd dose) if not done so already. Booster doses are now also available for those who are at most risk of COVID-19 and who had their 2nd dose at least 6 months ago.

The recommended enhanced measures from West Berkshire are anticipated to remain in place until the end of December 2021, although they will be reviewing them in 4 weeks' time. They have told us that any decision to amend or remove the measures will be based on the following: the case rate per 100,000 for school aged children; rate of increase (or decrease) in case rates; vaccination rates in school-aged children; the emergence of any new variants of concern; any adverse outcomes for those with COVID-19, and any other viruses in circulation.

At JOG, we will continually keep case rates in school and these measures under review and will notify parents/carers and students if there are any further changes. Some changes may be at short notice, but we will do our very best to communicate with you as effectively as possible.

I hope that this all makes sense but please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R Hawthorne
Head of School