



Dear Students, Parents and Carers

Newsletter (16) – 2nd November 2020

I hope despite everything that you had some enjoyable moments last week. As we return after half-term, I am contacting all families to inform you of some further planned changes to arrangements in school. Although we were planning these in any case, the announcement at the weekend of a second national lockdown from this Thursday only reinforces how important these measures are. I will write more about the lockdown at the end of this newsletter.

Further adaptations to school arrangements

Although we have all taken great steps to adapt our environment, we are all concerned that we still experienced a number of Covid cases in school at the end of last term which led to returning to remote learning. As a result, we feel that we need to take further adaptations to reduce the chance of transmission. From discussion with Public Health, it seems most likely that any transmissions are from personal contact, both in and out of school. The greatest number of cases was in the 6th Form (a pattern being seen in schools across the country) and we are implementing some 6th Form-specific changes and have written to families about these separately. There are also some whole-school adaptations required too, most significantly being improving the use of masks.

Use of Masks

The use of masks by students in school has fallen and it is one of the recommended measures for schools to consider to help reduce transmission. Currently, students have to self-manage and not everyone is doing this. Therefore we will be stepping up the system for masks from Thursday 5th November to:

Masks must be worn by everyone (unless exempted) in all indoor areas except classrooms, and the hall/restaurant. This includes going between classrooms within villages.

At the end of each lesson, teachers will ask students to put on their masks so that everyone goes into the corridors wearing them, wherever they are in school. On entering their next room, students will remove their masks, then use hand-sanitizer. Hand sanitizer is provided in every room, but students may choose to bring their own too.

We know that some people have good reasons why they cannot wear a mask. If this applies to your child, please [click here](#) to complete a form to confirm that you wish your child to be exempt from wearing a mask. Even if you have contacted us previously about this, please could you still complete this form, as we would like to confirm that we have a correct list as circumstances have changed so much. We will continue to ensure that staff are aware so that these students are not picked out for not wearing a mask. Otherwise, we would expect that all other students will comply with this request. I really do not want to make mask wearing part of our behaviour system as I do not want to put staff in the position of having to speak to students face-to-face. To avoid this, I absolutely expect every student to understand how important it is that we all play our part. Your support in re-enforcing this message is most welcomed. We will start this change to our policy on Thursday 5th November for all but be encouraging students from this morning to wear masks. I can see this morning that more students already are doing this.

Buses

Oxfordshire County Council, who run the school bus system, say they have let all families know about arrangements for where each year group should sit on the bus. We have now been given this information and the link is [here](#). The information is printed in small writing for each bus. One bus does not have the seating arrangements. We will be contacting OCC to see if they can make this clearer and to talk about concerns regarding getting good information to families about buses. We understand that there was a late change even

this morning to the bus service. However, please do make sure that your child is aware of where he or she should sit on the buses and do remind them that mask wearing is required on all buses.

Lunchtimes

Lunchtimes in the hall/restaurant are the only time that whole year groups are together in one space currently. We have been through alternative arrangements but each has more disadvantages than the current system. Therefore, we will continue with lunches in their current format but ensure that there is good ventilation and space to sit outside if the weather allows. I can confirm that we are able to provide our school meals service again, as we did last half-term.

Implications of the National Lockdown

It was announced on Saturday that we will be back in lockdown from Thursday, but schools are asked to remain open. It is good to have the vast majority of staff and students back in school today after the break. There has been no national guidance regarding other aspects of school other than lessons. We will be looking at all aspects of school again e.g. extra-curricular activities, and will be in touch later this week with other implications of the lockdown.

Everyone has a vital part to play

We saw last half-term how vulnerable schools are to being closed. Although we have plans in place for students to be absent, we clearly do not want to use them! If everyone follows the lockdown measures outside of school and the steps already taken in school with these additional steps described above, we can:

- keep school open: all students want a good education and for our year 11 and 13s in particular, further disruption will be highly damaging
- keep staff as safe as possible: we know that adults tend to experience more severe symptoms from Covid so it is understandable that some staff will be feeling very anxious about continuing to work in a school environment during a national lockdown
- keep vulnerable family members as safe as possible: we know many of our staff and students have vulnerable people in their families and are concerned about coming into school and then returning home.

So whether for their own education, that of others or to help others feel safe, it is critical that all students willingly follow the Covid rules. The best way we can help to keep school open is to ensure that everyone continues to keep their hands clean, wear their masks and maintain social distance whenever possible in school, and follows the lockdown rules outside of school.

We know we cannot control Covid completely in school or in the community and we may experience further disruption. We have our plans for remote learning, which will be in action from today. There will no doubt be some technical issues but we hope to identify and iron these out this week. Bear with us!

I hope that this letter reassures you that we are constantly considering how best to adapt school so that we can remain open and give our students the best education possible whilst keeping staff, students and all our families safe. I thank you for your role in supporting this message.

Yours sincerely



Mr R Shadbolt
Headteacher