

28/01/22

Dear Parent / Carer

1. COVID UPDATE AND FACE COVERINGS RETURNING IN CLASSROOMS NEXT WEEK

Unfortunately I am writing to report a significant increase in the number of positive Covid cases at the school over the last week. Last Thursday we had 23 students and 3 members of staff absent having tested positive. Unfortunately, that number has risen day by day to the point where we have now seen a fourfold increase since the decision was taken to remove face coverings in classrooms. There may not necessarily be a direct causal link between those facts, but it seems to be the only material change in circumstances. Today we have 105 students and 10 members of staff absent having tested positive.

As a result, from Monday 31st January, **students will be required to wear face coverings all day long whilst they are in the school building until further notice.** This is not a decision we have made lightly and we have liaised with Public Health officials. We will keep the situation under review and let you know when the situation eases.

We believe this is a sensible and proportionate decision at the current time, particularly given the ongoing government advice that *“People are still advised to wear one in crowded and indoor spaces where they may come into contact with people they do not normally meet”*. Students often come into very close contact with each other during the day and there seems to be an increase in Covid nationally amongst secondary age children. Besides, there are few places in this area where over 1800 people come into close contact indoors on a daily basis in a relatively confined area. We have been clear and consistent with our expectations and that has resulted in widespread buy-in from our wider school community who understand that we are trying to keep everybody safe. The reason the situation at school has been manageable up to this point is because people have been doing the right thing. As such may I remind you:

- **Please continue to send your child to school with 2 face coverings every day so that they carry a spare** (unless they are exempt).
- Please reiterate that we expect them to be **worn properly**, i.e. covering nose and mouth, all day long in the school building, including **during lessons and in communal areas**.
- Please encourage your child to use hand sanitiser or wash hands regularly throughout the day
- **Students should continue to undertake lateral flow tests twice weekly on Wednesday and Sunday, reporting the results** to both [NHS Test and Trace](#) and the school via this link:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=9MvSNrRjQEC2wd0f6DHTVWCKBeQnxE5LtN6oBJIcosFUMkhESzRWUEJEV01PUDk3WUZOWFZFUIhJRSQIQCN0PWcu>
- Please also report a positive result via the school email covid19@stratfordschool.co.uk.

Despite the daily operational challenges presented by Covid and ongoing absences, we have endeavoured to function smoothly on a daily basis. It has been a remarkable effort by everybody in the face of adversity and I am proud to lead such a resilient school. We have a terrific team of staff who have risen to the challenge, including some colleagues who are self-isolating at home yet have continued to teach their classes live via Teams. Last weekend our cross country runners competed in the Warwickshire Schools Championships; our Year 8 hockey team were unbeaten in the tournament we hosted this week; some Performing Arts students had an enjoyable trip to see Chicago at the Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham, and today we hosted a STEM workshop linked to HS2 with some Year 8 Technology students. You may also have seen images from an array of our lunchtime clubs this week on Twitter. Meanwhile, yesterday I was interviewed by a journalist from the Sunday Mirror who may well publish some of my comments at the weekend in an article about the current Covid situation in schools. All in all, it has been another remarkable week!

As ever, thank you for your ongoing support and understanding. Please follow us on twitter [@StraUponAvonSch](https://twitter.com/StraUponAvonSch) for brief, regular updates.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Wallace'.

Mr Neil Wallace
Headteacher