

Thursday 10th December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re. End of Autumn Term 2021 and beginning of Spring Term 2022

On Wednesday 8th December, the Prime Minister announced the implementation of [Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan](#), to reduce pressure on the NHS. Plan B sets out a number of additional measures across society to control the transmission of Covid-19. In this letter, I will share with you DfE advice following the release of Plan B. I will also detail plans at St Edward's for the end of this term and the beginning of the Spring term in January 2022.

The Government is clear about the critical importance of not disrupting the education of children and young people. We are assured that the Government will prioritise keeping all education settings open. I am sure that parents/carers are aware of some other local schools who have had to revert to online learning for groups of students. I am pleased that St Edward's is able to continue to offer full onsite learning for all students as we have managed to control the spread of the virus thus far. I hope that, by adhering to our protective measures, this will continue.

The measures set out below by the Department for Education hope to support the implementation of Plan B, thus reducing transmission rates and supporting the NHS. Relating particularly to school settings, the DfE states:

1. Attendance

School attendance remains mandatory and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children and young people to attend their education setting regularly continues to be a national priority. As usual, schools are able to grant leave of absence for pupils in exceptional circumstances.

The current attendance rates at St Edward's remain high and above national average. If your child will be absent from school, please telephone the student absence line on 01708 771 111 or email attendance@steds.org.uk.

2. Face coverings

Face coverings should be worn by pupils and students in Year 7 and above (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31st August 2021), staff and visitors in communal areas, unless exempt. The DfE state that this is a temporary measure. Pupils and students in Year 7 and above must also wear a face covering when travelling on public transport to and from school.

3. Face-to-face teaching

The DfE expect all education settings to continue to provide face-to-face teaching. Staff will continue to attend their place of work (in spite of the work from home guidance effective from Monday 13th December). The DfE confirm that teaching and learning should not be moved online as a result of the work from home guidance. Therapists and wider children's service professionals should continue to be invited into education and childcare settings.

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4. Vulnerable members of the community

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine programme, people previously considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk are not being advised to shield again.

The DfE confirm that children and young people previously considered CEV should attend their setting and should follow the same COVID-19 guidance as the rest of the population. In some circumstances, a child or young person may have received personal advice from their specialist or clinician on additional precautions to take and they should continue to follow that advice.

5. Testing

The DfE strongly encourage all those involved in education and childcare settings to continue regular testing (Lateral Flow, not PCR) and reporting their results. Students in secondary schools are encouraged to test and report their results. Schools are strongly encouraged to ask parents, guardians and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before entering the setting.

At St Edward's, visitors are currently only admitted by invitation. This is to ensure that all members of our community can remain safe and well. If you are invited to attend St Edward's, please wear a face mask throughout your visit (unless you are exempt). You will be invited to take a lateral flow test before entering the school.

6. Isolation

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be required to self-isolate and asked to book a PCR test. The Government plans to introduce Daily Contact Testing as soon as possible as an alternative to self-isolation for contacts of positive Omicron cases who are fully vaccinated or under the age of 18 years and 6 months. I will share information on this plan when available.

7. January return

Scientists continue to learn more about the impacts of the Omicron variant. To prepare for any possible changes in public health advice, all education and childcare settings have been advised to revisit their existing outbreak plans to ensure they are well prepared.

The DfE have confirmed that exams and formal assessments will go ahead this academic year. Students who are due to sit these assessments will be prepared and it is right that they should be given every opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt. There are internal assessments at St Edward's timetabled for January and throughout the year. Consequently, it is essential that students continue to prepare for these assessments.

The DfE have recently asked all secondary schools to provide an onsite test for pupils on our return in January. The aim is that testing in school helps to boost participation and will help reduce transmission after a period of mixing over the holidays. Whilst we are closed over Christmas, all staff and students are advised to test over the holidays, in line with national guidance. This means that they should test if they will be in a high-risk situation that day and before visiting people who are at [St Edward's Church of England Academy](https://www.stedwardsacademy.co.uk)

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higher risk of severe illness if they get Covid-19. The DfE advise that we should continue to test in line with government guidelines: it is recommended by the DfE that all staff and eligible students take up the offer of a vaccine.

I hope this explanation of DfE guidance provides a useful insight for parents/carers on the expectations on schools and their communities. To follow are details of our plans for the end of this term and the beginning of the Spring term in January 2022.

The end of Autumn Term 2021

I hope your child has told you about some of the lovely Christmas events that have been running at school this week and will continue until the end of term. The school is adorned with Christmas trees and decorations and looks really festive. We will share pictures of our decorations in the Christmas newsletter,

Students in the Sixth Form have been leading on our Christmas events which include:

- Dodgeball for all Year groups;
- Staff v Sixth Form Dodgeball (where Ms Wensley is the staff team captain, ably assisted by Mr Brome as staff coach);
- The 'Are you smarter than a 17-year old?' quiz which pitches staff against Sixth form students;
- The St Edward's Christmas Talent Show.

All events will take place in line with Covid restrictions. Alongside these events, we are delighted to offer:

- Our virtual Christmas concert before the end of term;
- School Christmas lunch (on Wednesday 15th December);
- Christmas Jumper Day on Friday 17th December (please don't feel the need to purchase a Christmas jumper if you don't already have one – students are allowed to wear their own clothes on this day).

We invite students to contribute to our charitable collection. This year we are collecting to support our new St Edward's chapel and new multi-faith prayer room. These are very special spaces for our school, our students and our community. Both spaces are developing beautifully and we are really proud of the contributions that staff, students and friends have made. Thanks for supporting this endeavour through your contribution to our Christmas collection, it is very much appreciated. If you could consider contributing £2.00, that would be very gratefully received.

From Monday 13th December, we will revert back to our regular practice of no coats in the building. We have completed works on the boiler system, meaning these are working much more efficiently and, even with the requirements for windows open, rooms are now warm enough. We will, of course, review this should temperatures decrease.

Please note that school will end at **12.00pm** on **Friday 17th December**.

The start of Spring Term – January 2022

As explained, the DfE has once again instructed schools to conduct Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) for all students at the start of the new term. Schools have been invited to employ a staggered start to the Spring term to allow for all students to be tested and admitted safely. It is hoped that this will help to stop the spread of Covid-19 following the school holidays.

Thank you for completing the Covid-19 testing permission form earlier this academic year. We will continue to use the previous lateral flow tests permissions throughout this academic year. Should you wish to withdraw permission for your child to have a lateral flow test, or if they are within 90 days of a positive PCR test, please email hope@steds.org.uk to let us know. If you have previously withdrawn permission, we may call you to confirm this is still the case for the January testing.

The Spring Term resumes on Tuesday 4th January 2022. Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th January are staff INSET days. School will remain closed to students on 4th and 5th January. Our staggered start to facilitate lateral flow testing will take place during Thursday 6th and Friday 7th January. Please see below for a timetable outlining the staggered start to term:

	Thursday 6 th January	Friday 7 th January
Year 7		Term begins at 8.30am
Year 8		Term begins at 8.30am
Year 9		Term begins at 10.30am
Year 10	Term begins at 8.30am	
Year 11	Term begins at 9.30am	
Year 12	Term begins at 10.30am	
Year 13	Term begins at 10.30am	

After taking the lateral flow tests, each group will remain in the Webster Hall for the beginning of term assembly. This will allow the lateral flow test results to be processed. Students will resume learning as soon as the assembly is over and the test results have been received.

Apologies for the length of this letter but I hope this helps all parents/carers to understand new DfE guidance and the impact of this on St Edward's. As always, our aim is to maintain normality for our learners and ensure that we are a safe and happy school where all of our community thrive so that they can live 'Life in all its fullness'.

With my best wishes



Jodie Hassan
Headteacher