

18 July 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Apologies for the length of this letter, but there is a lot to communicate. I'm not sure how you are feeling at the moment but, even by recent standards, I've never quite felt so unsure about where we are and such a rollercoaster of emotions. We're of course looking forward to the summer holiday, but the future still seems very uncertain.

There are plenty of positives from school to report. This half term has been by far the best in what has been a challenging year. The sports inter-form events were complimented by an excellent Sports Day and then the 'Sports Marathon' this last week saw another 200 odd students doing sporting events all day. We've had a return to some musical performances, although our summer concert sadly couldn't happen. We've also had a number of Duke of Edinburgh's Award Bronze and Silver expeditions take place and we had an excellent enrichment morning this last week with lots of local and more far-flung employees coming into school to discuss their careers – ranging from accountants and counsellors to the police, army and a pilot. We were also joined both virtually and in reality by a number of inspirational and motivational speakers. We've had a number of students working with a local artist, Amy McCarthy, thanks to the Helen Foundation, producing a fantastic installation which you can now see on the Teignmouth Seafront and will hopefully end up back on the school site in September.

This half term has also seen us getting back to normal with uniform and expectations and a return to proper assemblies. The above events and opportunities and these routines of school are so important. We have done all of this carefully and safely, which has not been easy, but we are of the firm belief that these aspects of school are vital for students' wellbeing and development, and for our school culture and ethos. This last year has perhaps revealed this to be the case even more than I think we previously realised.

Students may not have been quite so grateful for a round of significant end of year assessments but by and large they rose to this challenge really well. These have enabled us to check on their progress and give students some vital practice in independent learning. They have also enabled us to produce some robust report data which you will shortly be receiving.

Pandemic Measures

You will be aware that there has been a marked uplift in the number of Covid cases within our local community and we are now seeing a rise in cases amongst students and some staff. We continue to follow the Public Health England and Devon County Guidance and our approach is one of measured pragmatism. As I'm sure you're aware, there are some changes to the guidance for everyone and for schools over the following few weeks. We will not change any of our bubble systems, staggered breaks or other protocols for this last week of term and we will maintain the strict hygiene measures we have in place in order to minimise the risk of transmission within the school community. We will continue to monitor the situation and adapt our risk assessment accordingly for September.

Principal: Mr James O'Connell

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- From Monday 19 July, schools no longer have a role in track and trace and we do not need to tell students to isolate. However, students told to isolate before this date still need to do so, as instructed.
- **While no longer required to contract trace, under the health and safety duty of care regulations, schools are required to take appropriate action to protect pupils and staff. This includes those in relation to communicable diseases such as COVID. Under this guidance, schools can require students who are close contacts of positive cases to not come into school.**
- From this Monday, NHS Track and Trace will contact parents and ask them questions about contacts at home and in the community. They will not ask them about contacts at school, but they will ask parents to inform the school.
- Parents and pupils are still **required to report all positive tests - LFD and PCR - to schools** as you have been.
- Schools will not be routinely contacted by track and trace to ask for information, but they may be contacted if they are in an 'outbreak area' where there are high levels of community transmission.
- The legal requirement to self-isolate **does not change** on 19 July for individuals:
 - If they have been notified by NHS Test and Trace that they are a close contact (changes from 16 August)
 - If they or someone in their household has tested positive with a PCR
 - If they or someone in their household is symptomatic
- From 19 July, students who test positive with an LFD are still required to:
 - Self-isolate with their household members
 - Notify school of a positive LFD result
 - Seek a confirmatory PCR test within 2 days of the positive LFD
 - Notify school of their confirmatory PCR test result
 - If PCR test is negative and taken within 2 days, the isolation period will end for the individual and their household
 - If the PCR test is positive, a full 10 days' isolation must be completed by the student and their household.
- All previous guidance will remain in place until the end of the summer term for students on DCC operated school transport. Students will still be requested to continue to wear face coverings (unless in possession of an exemption card), and to remain seated in year groups/ according to seating plans if in place. Enhanced cleaning regimes will also remain.

End of term and next term

We break up this Friday 23 July and this will be a shorter day for students. We will finish the year with some celebratory assemblies and awards and students will leave the site by 1pm, allowing staff to say some farewells and consolidate for the next academic year.

The Autumn term for the new academic year will start for Years 7 and 12 on Wednesday 8 September and on Thursday 9 September for all other year groups at the normal times. As things stand, we will be returning to more normal school routines and timetables with a Tutor Registration, two lessons, break, two lessons, lunch, final lesson structure for everyone.

We will reassess in August in light of the situation and advice, so obviously plans could change. I will write to you in August to confirm this. However, it is our firm intention to start the year by focusing robustly on our standards and expectations. 2020-21 was a year that necessitated flexibility, understanding and some leniency. However, we know that one of the best and most important ways in which we can support our students is by insisting on the highest standards and expectations. We will be communicating separately on this and in particular about uniform, punctuality and the principle of kindness we expect from all.

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One important change is that from this September we will no longer be allowing any students to leave period 5 early at 3.05 due to the train times (unless there are exceptional circumstances). We allowed this this year due to some parental concerns but it has resulted in a growing number of problems and issues. It disrupts lessons every day and ultimately equates to those students who leave at this time missing out on over a week's worth of lesson time over a year. There will be areas of the school made available for any students who need to wait for transport and want to remain on site after 3.15. Another important change is that any student who arrives late for the school day after tutor registration time will no longer be marked in as 'late' but as having missed the first half of the day. This is part of our drive to improve on punctuality, which is heading in the right direction.

LFD Testing in September 2021

You may have seen that the Government has suggested that prior to students return in September, schools should administer lateral flow device (LFD) tests on site. Once they have returned to school, secondary students are advised to continue to LFD test twice a week during September at home, as they have been doing this year. The logistics of carrying out these tests on site would mean that many staff would need to not be teaching your children but carrying out tests. This would create more disruption and necessitate a staggered start for students, as was the case earlier this year, with some year groups not returning to school until the week beginning 13 September. We want to avoid this and we want to start this next academic year as safely and normally as possible. Therefore, we are planning to run a testing centre for our new Year 7 who will largely not have used LFD tests before. For other year groups, we have two options for you:

1. If you feel strongly that you would like your child to have LFD tests carried out on school premises at the beginning of term, then please respond accordingly and register **before the end of term, Friday 23 July** on the following link:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Hiwzz8D4KUifGHZ6Hu0oyfLBNj-lxB1Nti3roloyu->
We will then be in touch in August and arrange for these tests to be done at the start of term, with the second test carried out after term commences.
2. If you are happy for your child to carry out both LFD tests at home, then you can use the tests that we have been providing before the start of term and/or, **free of charge**, order more LFD tests directly from the Government on the following link and they will be delivered directly to your home. <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Finally, I do hope you will be able to relax a little and enjoy something of the summer. At least we live in a beautiful part of the world. The O'Connell family are hoping to enjoy some of Devon and Cornwall's less well-known beaches and coves plus a short week in the Highlands. Number 2 son is less than impressed at the idea of a walking holiday but – midges and rain permitting – we're hoping to convert him. Take care and thank you again for all your support.

Best wishes



James O'Connell
Principal

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ADVICE ON: Self-isolating and taking a test

If your child has symptoms, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform their education or childcare setting. You should immediately order a PCR test for them. If the PCR result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the PCR result is positive, they, other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the onset of symptoms.

If your child has a positive result from a lateral flow device (LFD) test, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform their education or childcare setting. You should immediately order a confirmatory PCR test. If the confirmatory test is taken within two days and the result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the confirmatory PCR test is positive (or is taken more than two days after the LFD), other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the LFD test.

PCR tests can be booked online through the [NHS Test & Trace website](#) or by calling 119.

PCR test results will be recorded with NHS Test and Trace automatically, but you should also communicate the result to the education or childcare setting during term time or summer provision.

Contact tracing

If your child gets a positive PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details you registered when ordering the PCR test. You and/or your child will be asked a series of specific questions designed to identify who your child has been in close contact with. Being in an education or childcare setting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact.

You will be asked to provide the contact details, if you know them, of any of the individuals – or their parents or guardians – who have been identified as close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts and provide appropriate instructions or advice (see below).

Self-isolation and/or testing of close contacts

At present, anyone identified as a close contact is legally required to self-isolate and must not attend their education or childcare setting (the only exception is if they are participating in a daily contact testing trial). Anyone identified as a non-household close contact by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of their most recent contact with that person. If they live in the same household, they must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of that person developing symptoms (see point 1 above) or, if that person was asymptomatic, the date of their test (see point 2 above). NHS Test and Trace will notify you of the day on which the self-isolation period ends. Close contacts are also advised to take a PCR test. If the test result is negative, they must still complete the full self-isolation period, as the test will not detect all positive cases. If the result is positive, they will need to self-isolate for a further 10 days – and NHS Test and Trace will contact them to identify any close contacts.

From 16 August, if the close contact is under 18, they will not have to self-isolate (in line with the policy for fully vaccinated adults) but will be asked to take an PCR test immediately, other than for very young children identified as non-household contacts, and they will not need to self-isolate while awaiting the results of the test. If the PCR test is positive, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch to identify close contacts (see points 5 and 6 above). Further guidance on these changes to self-isolation will be provided shortly.

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