

Monday 29th November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer(s),

Re: A return to face masks from today, 29th November 2021.

Firstly, apologies that the contents of this letter are with immediate effect however, the DfE (Department for Education) published updated guidance to schools yesterday evening.

Following the Prime Minister's briefing on Saturday 27th November and the temporary measures that he has initiated in response to the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK, schools have been told that from today, **all pupils in Year 7 and upwards should wear masks in school.**

We have been told that this is a precaution to slow the spread of any variant whilst they gather additional information. To be clear, this is a national measure and Bluecoat Trent's case numbers have been very low.

Face Masks: two things that you need to know:

1. Face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all settings by staff, visitors and pupils in Year 7 and above, unless they are exempt. This excludes classrooms but should a child wish to wear one there they can, it will *not be mandatory*.
2. Pupils (in Year 7 or above) should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport, unless they are exempt.

Testing:

We of course encourage you as a family to undertake regular lateral flow testing at home, twice a week. We always have these in school so if you need more, then your child can collect them in school from our office.

On Friday afternoon, the government has also indicated that there will be more testing when children return to schools in January. We have no further information on this but will update you nearer the time.

Other key information:

The current guidance on isolation remains the same. We have not returned to the close contact system that we had last year so only those confirmed or suspected by PHE (Public Health England) as close contacts of the Omicron virus will be told to isolate. They will tell you this if it is the case.

Vaccinations:

The DfE are still encouraging all students aged 12 and over to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on. Should parents choose this for their children (and they are old enough) then they can use the link below:

To book a vaccination, please visit: [Book or manage a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk). We have registered with the school vaccination service but as yet have no date to offer this in school.

We are in effect a year group bubble at Bluecoat Trent Academy, with our own entrance and facilities. We have a thorough Risk Assessment that staff are following so for now, the day will continue to follow normal times, entrances, timetables and movement around the building.

Please also remind your child about the importance of regular handwashing as always and social distancing expectations, including Hands-Face-Space

As before, we would recommend that students have an adequate supply of facemasks for the coming weeks. We advise that they have one if they are coming in on public transport, a different one for wearing in school, and at least one spare in case the facemask gets wet or damaged. We have bought a large supply of single-use facemasks to ensure all students have access to them, but ask that you provide an adequate supply for your child, as far as possible. Please ask if you need support with this so that we can help.

There are some exceptions:

- Some students will have medical exemptions, and we will check this with you today. It should not simply be a preference but a genuine medical reason. Please contact the school office if you have concerns or questions.
- When eating in the dining hall.
- When participating in physical exercise.
- On the playground outside.

Finally, I hope we are a long way off online lessons but if the last two years have taught us anything it is that things can change quickly during a pandemic. I would therefore like to be prepared for this eventuality. You will receive a link to a survey on ParentMail, we ask that you complete this so we can support families who would otherwise struggle in the event of online lessons.

We hope that this period of the wearing of face masks within schools will be brief but we will obviously continue to follow government guidance and I am sure you will support us with these messages at home.

Yours faithfully,



Miss C McManus
Principal