

15 December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

The last day of term is Friday 17 December 2021 and students will leave the school to go home at 12.30pm. Normal school uniform will be required on the last day of term. On the last day, students will have an opportunity for 'brunch', so they will have had the chance to eat before they come home. We will extend break time to allow for the canteen to serve all students who would like to eat.

It is important to note that there will be no school buses when students leave school at 12.30pm, so it is vital that arrangements for travel home have been made in advance please. As has been recently announced, we are to stagger the return of students and test all those for whom consent to testing has been given. Thank you to all of you who have responded to the various emails and letters and completed the consent form, we have close to 80% now and factoring in the number of students with a very recent confirmed COVID case, the numbers are back to where they have previously been, thank you. Times will be sent by email to those who have given consent tomorrow, Thursday 16 December 2021. We cannot administer the test without consent, so please do not just attend as we will not have the capacity to try to confirm consent.

The pattern is as follows:

- **Tuesday 4 January 2022 – Years 11, 10 & 9 test** – Students will be given an appointment time by email. After the test they will return to home and we will only make contact if the test is positive. Students should wear non-school uniform please
- **Wednesday 5 January 2022 – Years 11, 10 & 9** come to school for the normal time and **in normal school uniform**. **Years 7 & 8** test, Students will be given an appointment time by email. After the test they will return to home and we will only make contact if the test is positive. Students should wear non-school uniform please
- **Thursday 6 January 2022** the whole school are back to the normal daily pattern please.

Can I please ask you to continue to test at home. There will be more test kits available this week once they are delivered to school and we will send them home with your children. Please also emphasise at home the need to wear suitable face coverings, clean hands and maintain social distancing whilst at school and in other settings outside of the home.

I know that this has been a long two years, but cases in school are relatively low at the moment, with only nine confirmed cases in the student population as of today. Please pass on my thanks to all of your children and thank you for your support. It is not easy to spend two years with teachers nagging at you to clean your hands, wear a face covering, open a window and whatever you do, don't cough, and for the most part students have taken the nagging with good grace. I have to say that staff are tired of nagging and are wishing for the days when we do not have to, we do not relish any of it.

I have written a few end of term letters expressing my shock at still seeing the school and our wider community being impacted by COVID-19, but here we are, again. It is hard to explain or to put into words the impact that the last two years has had within the school, but I am sure the same impact is reflected within many of our families as well. I worry that behaviour for learning and attitudes towards learning are not quite where they were, but I know that we are fortunate and our students are far ahead of many of their peers I worry though that attendance to school has fallen and that in the long term this will impact on individual children's outcomes, and therefore life chances and choices. I worry that some of the fun has gone from all schools and that if we are not careful schools across the length, and breadth of our country will lose their soul. More than anything though, I worry that those who sit outside of school communities like ours, those who sit in power or those who sit in judgement have no understanding of just how tired some staff, some students and some parents are.

I am forever grateful to be the head here, it is a great school. Not because of buildings or results, but because of the vast majority of people within our community are the very best of people. I would just like to take the chance to again thank you for all of your support and to apologise if we are nagging over attendance, or face coverings homework or behaviour. The truth is that your children are in a race and whilst I can just start to think about the end of my race and a time I can retire, our students are still trying to make their way to the start line. I want them best placed to beat their peers and win their race, whatever that win looks like for them.

However, what I know to be true, is that our students are far better prepared and far better engaged than they currently give themselves the credit for. Year 11 in particular are too quick to tell all of us what is wrong and not see how much they have got right. How hard they have worked and where they are in a positive light. 2019 saw record attainment and progress, better than either the Girls or Boys schools ever gained and I think that Year 11 will do just as well, but they need to believe this themselves – please, please tell them that we are proud of them and that we know that they can do it!

I want all students to leave this school to be as close as they can be to the start line for adult life, so that they can stay ahead of their peers in the race that is life. In keeping ahead, they have the opportunity to make their lives safer, longer, healthier and more comfortable. To do this we need them in school, we need them learning, we need them to want to get as far as they can and that is where your support at home cannot be overstated. Without you and your energy and your belief, they will not get as far as they might. You are the key difference in their lives, your love, your belief and your desire to see them be better version of yourself is key. So if we moan and groan about face coverings or open the windows and let in the cold air, please see why we do it, we want your children to have the fullest, longest, safest and most fulfilling life possible.

I know that everyone is tired, I know that a shadow has sat over all of us for the last two years, but the truth is that the community we are all part of will move out from under it and I have seen how strong we are and how much we can give to each other and I am a better person for seeing the strength within our community. So, a heartfelt thanks to you as parents, the staff and all the students. I hope you have a peaceful and relaxing Christmas, and that all of your family can be there with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Flanagan', written in a cursive style.

Mr K Flanagan
Headteacher