



Armthorpe Academy

Enriching Lives, Inspiring Ambitions

3rd January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Happy New Year! I hope you have managed to relax and enjoy time with family and friends over the festive period. As predicted, the DFE released updated guidance for educational settings over the weekend to help manage the ongoing surge of Omicron across the country. Following a meeting with the Local Authority and Public Health this morning, I have summarised key information that will apply until the government review on January 26th.

The following steps look at preventative measures to try to maximise continuity and minimise dissemination of the virus in school. Thank you in anticipation for working with us; we must work together.

Return to School

A reminder of previously published dates and times. We are operating a very slightly staggered return for operational purposes. To ensure social distancing, we can only test 60 students at any given time. **Please ensure your child attends school in full uniform, with a bag equipped with pencil case and planner, at the correct time.** To help ventilation, windows will be open in classrooms, so students can wear coats until further notice. Please note 'coats should be over a blazer'. Any hoodies will be confiscated (as communicated at the start of the academic year). Students should use the entrance by the side of the Sports Hall. Staff will be at the front of school to meet and greet. Anyone who hasn't consented to testing should still arrive at the same time.

On-site Lateral Flow Testing January 2022			
Date	Year Group	Student Surname	Time
Tuesday 4 th January	Year 11	A – K	8:30 am
		L - Z	9:30 am
	Year 10	A – L	10:30 am
		M - Z	11:30 am
	Year 9	A – L	1:00 pm
		M - Z	2:00 pm
Wednesday 5 th January	Year 7	A – I	8:30 am
		J - Z	9:30 am
	Year 8	A – K	10:30 am
		L - Z	11:30 am

Should your child test positive, we will contact you immediately to collect them. They will be isolated until they leave the building, so we would recommend completing a test at home prior to returning to school.

Testing during January, Close Contacts and Self-Isolation Periods

We will be issuing all students with another box of lateral flow testing kits when they return to school. Please encourage your child to continue to routinely test twice a week, preferably a Sunday and Tuesday evening. If your child displays any symptoms, or anyone in the household tests positive then please test daily. Additional test kits can be collected daily from the main canteen at lunch.

If your child tests positive, please email attendance immediately, isolate and book a PCR test. Self-isolation guidelines have now changed for people working in education, which includes children.

As of 22/12/21, the 10-day isolation period has been reduced to 7 days providing:

- LFD tests on Day 6 and Day 7 are both negative. The first test must be taken no earlier than Day 6 of the self-isolation period and the second must be 24 hours afterwards.
- If both tests are negative (with no line at all in the test line region – T) and your child does not have a high temperature, self-isolation can end on Day 8.
- If either test is positive, 10 days of self-isolation is still required.

Any staff fully vaccinated, or students identified as close contacts are advised to test daily for 7 days rather than self-isolate. We cannot enforce this, but strongly encourage to protect our community.

Face Coverings

The DFE recommendation is that **face coverings are worn in all indoor areas including classrooms** by all stakeholders until further guidance, unless exemption applies. Face coverings can be removed outdoors at break and lunch. Again, we cannot and will not enforce this, but we would strongly encourage you to support the school by talking to your child about the importance of wearing a face covering properly. There is a higher probability of staff remaining in school to teach children if face coverings are worn. Likewise, we will be reminding students about **Hands - Face – Space**. Please talk to your child about the importance of social contact. We appreciate children are children, but given this virus spreads through touch, we need to minimise unnecessary physical contact. Students will be asked to sanitise hands each time they enter and leave a learning space, but they need to show responsibility when walking in corridors and at social times.

Year Group Separation

To reduce social mixing where possible, we will be re-introducing year group areas at social times. Each year group will have an allocated indoor area before school and a staggered lunch that students will be informed about on their return. It is our expectation that students will adhere to rules and be in the correct place. If COVID preventative measures are not adhered to, then consequences will apply. It should be emphasised this is poor choice behaviour, which will not be tolerated. Most of our students care about the staff and one another and have a fantastic attitude, therefore we will not allow the behaviour of a very small minority to undermine our school ethos. **Quite simply, to reduce close contacts, students must stay with members of their year group before school and at social times whilst on the school site.**

Year 10 and 11 Examinations

Thankfully, **modular exams** in Sports Studies, Sports Science (Year 11 resit students only), Travel and Tourism, Child Development and Health and Social (Year 11 only) **will still be taking place as planned**. We are delighted because preparation for these exams in school has been excellent. Students have been issued with a timetable and a letter prior to Christmas from our examinations officer that includes essential information about malpractice. We have already run intensive drop-down sessions as part of preparation prior to Christmas, please encourage your child to revise at home. Little and often is the key. Students have all the content they need; they just need to memorise it.

Collapsing Classes and Student Behaviour

Once exams have finished, we will be using the Sports Hall to collapse classes where possible to enable us to teach year groups on mass. We can accommodate up to 120 students in the hall. This is far from ideal, but it will be used as a measure to keep children in school in the inevitable absence of staff. We have previously combined classes but not to this extent. Again, we hope you will appreciate this is an adaptation that requires everyone to adapt. Children cannot be taught in the same way in a large group in an exam hall as they can in a classroom, but it keeps them in school. In the event of staff

being absent from school, we will be prioritising specialist staff for Year 11 and 10 exam groups, so please be mindful of this if your child does not have their normal teacher. Again, good behaviour for learning in such a large group setting is imperative. As always, our behaviour system will focus on catching students being good, but if students do not follow basic expectations and show defiance by simply refusing, then our behaviour policy will be followed rigorously. Education is a gift. Although we will always help and support students with learning needs and difficulties they are facing in life, in the present environment, we do not have the staffing capacity or the time to coax and cajole students simply showing defiance. Again, I emphasise most of our students are fabulous, so this measure is not a change, just a reminder that to provide the best quality of education for all in what will continue to be a challenging time (particularly re staffing numbers) our high expectations must be met. Heads of Year will be in contact with you immediately should this not be the case.

I appreciate this is a long letter, but as always, I have tried to be as open and honest with you as possible. This next term will be a challenge, but after a year in post now, I know you will work with us to help our children thrive. Rest assured that despite COVID, we are still working tirelessly with the trust to continue our journey of school improvement. I look forward to writing to you in the coming weeks about matters other than COVID to share positive developments. Please keep abreast of developments through the weekly newsletter.

Take care and stay safe.

Thank you for your anticipated support once again this year.

Kind regards



Claire Robbins
Headteacher

