

04 January 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you have had a restful Christmas with your family. You will, no doubt, have seen the update by the DfE regarding the return to school arrangements for the spring term and this email is a summary to help inform you of what this means in our setting at Birchwood.

- Our students will return to school on **Thursday 6 January**. You will need to ensure your child has done a Lateral Flow Test on **Wednesday 5 January** and submitted photo ID of the negative test result to the school by emailing [dpo@birchwoodhigh.org.uk](mailto:dpo@birchwoodhigh.org.uk)
- We will be checking returns and mopping up any student who has not submitted a test result first thing on Thursday.
- All the Covid-19 mitigations we had in place in December will continue and students will need to continue to wear face masks in classrooms and indoor settings for January (this will be reviewed by the DfE on 26-January). Our students have been remarkably compliant and understand the rationale in terms of trying to keep everyone safe from viral infection.
- Members of staff will wear a face mask where they are unable to maintain a 2m social distance with either students or colleagues. When teaching from the front, and to aide communication, teachers do not have to wear a mask. In the classroom, we will keep the room ventilated (we are exploring the use of CO2 monitors and air cleaners but unfortunately the government rhetoric is not being matched with supply). Students can also wear coats if the weather is cold.
- If your child, unfortunately, tests positive on a LFT, please go to a drive-in PCR testing site (for example Stansted Airport) – the results return 24 hours later. Do not request a postal test as this can take up to 7 days to get a result. Can you let the school know as soon as possible so we can support you and ensure work is set?
- From Monday 10 January, students should return to self-testing twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays).
- The period of self-isolation has been reduced from 10 days to 7 days providing you have negative LFT results on day 6 and 7 (as the viral load weakens, you will notice that the second red bar starts to diminish and should return to a single red bar by day 7). We will be issuing fresh supplies in due course.
- If someone in your family tests positive for Covid-19 and your child does not have any symptoms, please ask them to take a LFT every morning. Providing these are negative, they can come to school.

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- For students who are absent because of Covid-19, we will set remote work for them either through Teams or SMHW. Hopefully, the reduction to 7 days isolation will mean that they only miss a week of school.

It is difficult to predict how things will run for January and February. We know that the Omicron variant is particularly contagious, but it is generally milder in terms of its symptoms. Overall, we want to keep the school open as much as possible as we know that students prefer coming to school to learn than being isolated and studying in front of a computer screen. Thank you for your continued support as this makes a huge difference.

Yours sincerely

*Chris Ingate*

Dr C Ingate  
Principal