

15<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of 2021, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to parents, carers and staff for their support throughout this year.

Prior to March 2020, one couldn't have imagined what we have had to face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From an education perspective, the idea of closing schools for months on end, home-schooling, keeping children in designated 'bubbles', the wearing of face coverings and maintaining social distancing, setting up lateral flow testing sites, and significant changes to the examination process to name just a few would have been incomprehensible. However, by working together and being flexible and adaptable to change, often at very short notice, we have worked our way through the various challenges this pandemic has presented us with and done our very best for the children at the College under the circumstances.

The ongoing pandemic continues to place significant staffing pressures on the College, and it is unfortunate that we have had to implement a Year Group Rota in this final week of term to ensure we have enough staff to keep children safe on the College's site. I am grateful for your support and understanding with this matter.

As previously notified, the College is preparing to test students once for COVID-19 on their return in January. There will be a staggered return of year groups between Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 7<sup>th</sup> January to accommodate on-site testing, details of which are outlined below:

| <b>Date</b>                       | <b>Year Groups returning to College</b> | <b>Year Groups <u>NOT</u> in College (remote learning)</b> | <b>Notes for returning Year Group</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> January   | Years 7, 11,<br>Years 12, 13/14         | Years 8, 9, 10   | To be based in tutor rooms            |
| Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January | Year 8                                  | Years 9, 10  | To assemble in the Sports Hall        |
| Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> January  | Year 9                                  | Year 10  | To assemble in the Sports Hall        |
| Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January    | Year 10                                 |  | To assemble in the Sports Hall        |

On Tuesday 4th January students will remain in their tutor groups for the whole day and follow a programme of learning when not being tested. This programme includes sessions on online safety, safeguarding, anti-bullying, kindness, mental health and wellbeing and behaviour for learning. Please note there will be no catering on this day, with the exception of food provided for our free school meal students, so **please ensure your child brings a packed lunch, snacks and water with them on 4<sup>th</sup> January**. Mr Golding, Head of Sixth Form, will notify Post 16 students of what is planned for their time in College on this day. Thereafter, normal lessons will resume from Wednesday 5th January for year groups already tested. Year groups tested between 5th-7th January will initially be based in the Sports Hall, and once testing for the year group is complete they will return to normal lessons (hopefully by the start of Period 3). A remote learning provision for the days year groups are not in College will be in place, with details published on the Show my Homework platform. There will be no live remote lessons during this period.

This week information has been sent to you regarding a COVID update from the College's perspective. Additionally, details on the new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 introduced on 14<sup>th</sup> December were provided and information on COVID-19 vaccinations. There is clearly a great deal of concern and uncertainty in respect of the Omicron variant, but it appears clear that the transmissibility rates of this new strain are very high with cases doubling every 2 to 3 days and that it will become the dominant variant in the UK very shortly. However, what is less clear is how virulent the Omicron variant is compared to Delta. I believe it is highly likely the government will introduce further restrictions and control measures in the coming days and over the forthcoming Christmas period. To this end, the College is working on its contingency plan in the event we are directed to change our return arrangements in January. A request for information from parents and carers who are critical workers will be sent out shortly so we can make plans for a Support School for those eligible should it be necessary.

On a more positive note, I would like to congratulate all of our students who have participated in recent sporting events including football, netball and cross country running. There have been some excellent results, great team spirit shown and most importantly the students really enjoyed it. Well done to all those involved and thank you to the PE Team for arranging and coordinating attendance at the various events. I would also like to thank everyone who supported our Christmas themed mufti day last Friday. To date this has helped raise over £570 for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Derriford Hospital.

Our Year 11 students have recently completed their mock exams for all subject areas they are studying. It is unfortunate we have had to change our plans for a Mock Results Evening to a lower key event during the school day, for students only.

However, I hope your children find it useful and that it helps them to prepare for the formal exams planned for Summer 2022.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas break (for those that manage to have a break) and I look forward to welcoming back your children in January. Please keep a close eye on the College website, and SIMS Parent App, for any information that we may need to publish over the Christmas period in response to government announcements regarding the pandemic. Also, please encourage your children to continue completing twice weekly lateral flow tests and to complete a test the evening of, or morning before, the day they return to school. Happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely

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

Dr Jeremy Plumb  
Headteacher