



BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

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4th January 2022

Dear parents and carers,

I hope very much that you and your families and loved ones have had a lovely Christmas holiday, and that students are looking forward to coming back to school.

On Sunday January 2nd, the Department for Education sent out new guidance for schools, so I have a number of updates for you.

Testing for students after the holiday period

Please can I ask that students in all year groups undertake an LFT test either on the evening of January 4th or (preferably) the morning of January 5th before returning to school?

In addition, the Government have asked that students in Year 7 and above undertake one on-site test, on return in January. This will help boost testing participation and reduce transmission after a period of social mixing during the holidays.

The schedule for this at Blackminster has already been shared with you, but as a reminder:

January 5th

Year 6 in at 8:25 as normal.

8:45 – 8KS

9:30 – 8SB

10:15 – 7MA

11:00 – 7JR

11:45 – 7SP

January 6th

Whole school in at 8:25 as normal

If you do not consent to your child being tested please send them with a note to say that.

Students in all year groups strongly encouraged to continue testing twice weekly at home and to [report all results to NHS Test and Trace](#) and to us at school.



Even if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, they are strongly encouraged to take part in LFD testing on-site through ATS or at home once they have completed their isolation period for their prior infection.

Changes to the self-isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless the person cannot test for any reason.

Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. If both these test results are negative, and the person does not have a high temperature, they may end their self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to their education setting from day 8.

Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation. Further information is available in the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection](#).

Daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19

People who are fully vaccinated, or children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.

Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for at-risk 5 to 11 year olds, and booster doses for at-risk 12 to 15 year olds and all 16 to 17 year olds

On Wednesday 22 December, the government accepted advice from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#) that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed. The NHS is working through updated guidance and will set out how this is going to be operationalised shortly.



In response to the threat from the Omicron variant, the JCVI advised that a Pfizer booster vaccine should be offered to:

- children aged 12 to 15 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of immunosuppressed individuals, and those who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose

The NHS will communicate how eligible children and young people can get their boosters shortly. Vaccination reduces the likelihood of infection, helps break chains of transmission and is safe and effective – so we encourage all those eligible to consider taking up the offer.

Updated guidance on the use of face coverings in education settings

From Sunday 2 January, the Government are recommending that face coverings are worn in classrooms where pupils in year 7 and above are educated. Here at BMS we are asking that ALL students follow this guidance. The advice is short term only, to support pupils and teachers as they return to school this term and builds on the existing proportionate guidance that recommends face coverings for all adults in communal areas of all settings. The DfE advice on face coverings in classrooms will be in place until Wednesday 26 January, when Plan B regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed. We will, of course, keep parents and carers informed as soon as we know more.

Thank you once again to all of our students' parents and carers for your support for the school during this time.

Kind regards,



Ms Linda McQuone
Executive Headteacher

