



The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust

Learning Communities, Inspired by Faith

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Date: 29.11.21

Re: New Covid-19 Department for Education Guidance

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you are well.

By now, I'm sure that you will have read or heard about the Prime Minister's announcement of 27th November regarding the temporary introduction of new measures because of the Omicron variant. There are several implications for schools following the announcement. The DfE have updated their guidance for schools, and I have summarised the main points in an addendum to this letter.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, each school in the BKCAT has its own risk assessment and is supported in stepping measures up and down depending on the context at a given time. The main priority of each school's risk assessment is to protect face-to-face education as we know that this has the greatest impact on pupils' educational recovery and their mental health and wellbeing.

Mindful that 2020 saw many events take place virtually, we are asking schools to consider how parents can, if possible, be safely involved in some activities in the run-up to Christmas this year. We know that this is important to you and your children. Balancing the benefits and risks is a difficult task for school leaders but we will work together and support each other to achieve what we can under the circumstances. We know that you will understand this, and we thank you for your continued support.

Finally, I would just like to reiterate my thanks to parents/carers for your ongoing support as we continue to negotiate the challenges of schooling during a pandemic. Despite the obvious challenges, many good things continue to happen in the schools every day, for example the Trust recently held a virtual BKCAT Climate Summit, linked to COP 26 and included pupil representatives from every school. Our Year 11 and Year 13 pupils are preparing for or completing their mock examinations and have been excellent in every way, despite not having sat such assessments for a long time. Our schools continue to support their local communities with fundraising and other activities and will continue to do so in the run up to Christmas.

Sunday marked the start of Advent, which more than ever this year, must symbolise hope and light at a time of great challenge.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Fitton, CEO



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Face Coverings

Where pupils in Year 7 (which would be children who were aged 11 on 31 August 2021) and above are educated, it is recommended that face coverings should be worn by pupils, staff and adult visitors when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas.

In primary schools, it is recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff and adults (including visitors) when moving around in corridors and communal areas. Health advice continues to be that children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings.

Face coverings do not need to be worn when outdoors.

There are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances. Some people are less able to wear face coverings, and the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Mixing and Bubbles

It is not recommended that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that bubbles will not need to be used in schools.

However, schools should make sure their contingency plans cover the possibility that it may become necessary to reintroduce bubbles for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups. Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' would not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education.

Tracing Close Contacts and Isolation

Close contacts in schools are now identified by NHS Test and Trace and education settings are not expected to undertake contact tracing.

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation.

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms

Pupils, staff, and other adults should follow public health advice on when to self-isolate and what to do. They should not come into school if they have symptoms, have had a positive test result or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19.

If anyone in school develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, they should be sent home and follow public health advice.



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Asymptomatic Testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits, 3-4 days apart. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to test.

Confirmatory PCR Tests

Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the 'stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection'. They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19.

Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.

Vaccination

All eligible staff and pupils aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters.

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on