

Ref: GWA/LWO

13 December 2021



Dear Families

My end of term letter offers up some of the more operational issues that we are currently facing and most notably the impact of the continuing pandemic. For a brighter and more uplifting report, please refer to the accompanying end of term newsletter which highlights some of the many positive achievements of your children this term.

COVID Update

Just as things were beginning to settle and with a somewhat inevitable predictability, along came Omicron, the latest 'variant of concern' to put another spanner in the works and to lead to more adjustments to our plans and preparations both at school and at home! The Government directive to wear masks in communal areas and on transitions posed us no issues as we had been insisting on that for some time. Students were also well placed to revert to wearing face coverings on public and school transport and have done so without fuss. That said, we have stepped up our levels of vigilance in canteens and social spaces and continue with our intense cleaning operations during the school day and the holidays.

Your children deserve immense credit for the way in which they continue to handle themselves throughout this seemingly never ending period of disruption and the way in which they are, almost universally, responding with good humour and courtesy to these inconveniences. My colleagues, too, are worthy of similar recognition for their efforts this term and the way in which they continue to deliver top quality education in often cramped, densely-populated environments whilst simultaneously trying to inject fun and joy into the lives of your youngsters through a plethora of extra-curricular activities, trips, expeditions and visits.

Large scale gatherings have been reduced significantly in recent weeks with the very regrettable cancellation for a second year of our carol concert, fashion show, Christmas assembly and several planned trips that involved mixed year groups. The very last thing I would want to do is to be putting either students or staff at undue additional risk immediately before the festive season and I continue to err on the side of caution for that reason.

As I write, we only have 4 children and 1 member of staff isolating due to positive PCR tests and the situation in school remains manageable. Learning has continued at pace and we have, thankfully, managed to avoid sending any children home to learn remotely although we did come very close at the end of October when 247 children that month had tested positive and a similar proportion of the staff.

Arrangements for the end of term and the new year will replicate what happened this time last year. There will be a staggered departure on Friday 17 December from 12 noon, as follows.

12.00pm Sixth Form

12.05pm Y7 and Y8

12.15pm Y9 and Y10

12.25pm Y11

Please ensure that arrangements are in place for your child/ren to get home safely, taking all belongings with them. The school is closed for the duration of the Christmas holidays.

We will be ensuring that all children are tested for COVID before they return to school in January, appointments have been emailed for your children to come in and test on the following days. If you have any difficulties, please contact office@tewkesburyschool.org

Ashchurch Road, Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire GL20 8DF

Reception: **01684 292152**
Attendance Line: **01684 851806**

Email: **office@tewkesburyschool.org**
Website: **www.tewkesburyschool.org**

Headteacher: **Mr G M Watson** BSc PGDip NPQH

Tuesday 4 January 2022 Testing for the following:

9:00am Sixth Form

11:00am Year 11

1:00pm Year 10

Wednesday 5 January 2022. Students in Years 10-13 return to school for normal lessons. Testing for the following:

9:00am Year 9

11:00am Year 8

1:00pm. Year 7

Thursday 6 January 2022. Students in Years 7-9 return for normal lessons.

Your children continue to be provided with test kits for voluntary twice-weekly testing but it remains disappointing that the number of children and staff routinely testing and reporting those outcomes remains around 50%. Additional testing kits will be issued to all students on Thursday or Friday this week.

Y11 and 6th Form exams

We have been delighted with the way that more senior students have approached their recent mock examinations. Y11 students in particular, who had not previously experienced a 'full-on' examination session responded very maturely and now have a much clearer understanding of their academic progress and the challenges that they will face in subsequent mock exams later in the year. Whilst the Government's ambition remains to have a full suite of externally assessed formal examinations in the summer we will continue to prepare for a fallback position that will involve centre assessed grades as has happened for the last two years.

It is apt at this point to offer our thanks to our outgoing Examinations Officer, Mrs Shoesmith, who some of you may remember as your geography teacher! Mrs Shoesmith has been a longstanding servant of the school, an exceptional classroom practitioner and an equally proficient Exams Officer in recent years. She leaves us at the end of this term and we offer her our sincere thanks and best wishes for whatever the future may hold.

In other news, we have now submitted a further capital bid to refurbish the ageing science block and we keep our fingers crossed that we may be as successful as we have been in recent years with the Design Technology and English bids which have improved our infrastructure very significantly.

I was also pleased that the recent Headship interviews went well with a strong field expressing an interest in the position. After a gruelling two-day interview process, Ms Kathleen McGillicuddy was appointed to the position. She will take the reins from September 2022 and I will work assiduously to ensure the transition is a smooth one.

A very Happy Christmas to you all.



Mr G M Watson
Headteacher

Ashchurch Road, Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire GL20 8DF

Reception: **01684 292152**
Attendance Line: **01684 851806**

Email: **office@tewkesburyschool.org**
Website: **www.tewkesburyschool.org**

Headteacher: **Mr G M Watson** BSc PGDip NPQH