

Ref: GWA/LWO

4 January 2022



Dear Families

I hope you all managed to have some downtime with family and friends over the festive season and took advantage of whatever you could given the restrictions upon us due to COVID.

It is COVID once more that is once again dominating my thinking as we prepare to welcome your children back to school. Testing of our older children has begun this morning and I have just heard of our first positive case from on-site testing. That testing resumes tomorrow for the younger year groups with all children successfully reunited back in school by Thursday 6 January and Y10-13 returning tomorrow. We continue to hope for the best and plan for the worst.

To give you some context, over the Christmas holiday period we have been notified of 12 children who have tested positive for the virus with only 3 of those still needing to self-isolate before returning to school. I am also pleased to report that we only have one member of staff who has not returned to school and is, today, seeking a PCR test. Like the Government, we, too, desperately want to keep your children in face to face education rather than reverting to remote learning. I suspect it will be potential staff absence rather than student absence that could become a limiting factor especially given the shortage of agency supply staff. We are already seeing similar staffing shortages in other public services impacting negatively on society.

COVID Symptoms - If your child is presenting with COVID symptoms, please do ensure they take a lateral flow test and, if in any doubt, please keep them off school.

COVID Testing - Large numbers of students have been trickling into school this morning to take tests at our on-site testing centre. I appreciate this is inconvenient for many students and families and thank you and your children for your support. Please continue to ensure your child tests twice per week and reports those results to the school [HERE](#) and NHS [HERE](#), for ease, the reporting links are also available on the Edulink One app.

Face Coverings - As mentioned previously, your children have been remarkably good-spirited in relation to the requirement to wear face coverings in communal areas and on transitioning between lessons. It will not have escaped your attention that the Government has now introduced new operational guidance for schools which states that students should now also wear face coverings in classrooms. This will happen when your children return to school and we are told that the position will be reviewed in just 3 weeks on January 26. Please ensure that your child returns with a plain blue or black face mask as they had been accustomed to wearing before we broke up. Their continued good nature is very much appreciated and we will lose this additional requirement at the earliest opportunity. Replacement navy blue masks are available to buy from our [online shop](#) costing £2.

Parents' Evenings - This term sees a number of parents' evenings which will be conducted remotely. Remote parents' evenings have been very well-received and are one of several positive educational developments resulting from the pandemic. Year 10 Parents' Evening takes place this Thursday, 6 January.

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

Chromebooks - Another positive has been the widespread take up of Chromebooks and the way in which the school has moved on with digital learning technologies. Google Classroom is now used extensively and we are well placed to continue with remote learning should we be forced to go down that route. Very few students are now without Chromebooks and any parents for whom the cost remains an obstacle should please contact our charitable partner Birmingham eLearning Foundation, email: enquiries@belf.org.uk or ring 0121 314 3407.

Against this gloomy backdrop, we do intend to continue with outstanding teaching and a wide range of extracurricular activities and opportunities to lift the hearts and brighten the spirits of your children. I will continue to keep you updated of any significant developments as the weeks go by.

Best wishes and Happy New Year.

Yours faithfully



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