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Dear Parents and Carers,

Extra measures to tackle Covid-19 cases in schools

As we approach the Christmas break we would like to take the opportunity to thank you again for all of your support during the pandemic. We recognise you have all gone to incredible lengths throughout 2021 to support the safety of our school community.

Mirroring the national picture the incidence of Covid-19 cases in Middlesbrough/Redcar and Cleveland continues to rise, as well as the increase in the prevalence of the Omicron variant.

Based on the current situation we have been advised by Mark Adams the Director of Public Health that it is vital to take proactive steps to reduce the spread of infection and minimise the risk of further disruption to education when schools return in January 2022.

In Middlesbrough there have been 918 positive cases in the previous two weeks up to 11th December. Of these cases, 335 (36%) were aged 0-19 years old.

In Redcar & Cleveland there have been 1,119 positive cases in the previous two weeks up to 11th December. Of these, 393 (35%) were aged 0-19 years old.

Our concern is that the increase in rates among younger people will lead to higher levels of infection among older, more vulnerable groups. We are seeing multiple cases of Covid among people living in the same household showing how easy the infection can spread to other family members.

We are writing to you today to advise that our school has been reviewing its Covid-19 risk assessment and from 4th January and on advice from Public Health although we will be working outside of national guidance and introducing these additional measures to keep our school community safe:

- *Household close contacts should take a PCR test and isolate until results are known, and return to school if the PCR test is negative.*
- *Close contacts of a case in school will be asked to take a PCR test and as above, isolate until they have a negative result.*
- *We ask that Upper School and Post 16 students have a lateral flow test the day before we return to school in January. We also encourage testing twice a week, again with lateral flows and be alert to any potential symptoms.*



Please be reassured that we understand the problems many of our students have with having a PCR or lateral flow. Please speak to class teachers if you require support. Finally, consent forms are being issued for both the Covid-19 vaccine for 12-15 year-olds and the child flu vaccine for all schoolchildren from reception age upwards. We would ask that you carefully consider the benefits of both vaccines. Our priority is that children can remain in education and learn alongside their friends.

From this weekend 12-15 year olds will also be able to book their Covid-19 vaccine online. Please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus for more information.

Working together with schools, parents and carers have done a brilliant job in the most trying of circumstances, so we thank you again for playing your part.

Kind regards

Janis