



31st December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have been enjoying the Christmas break and have avoided being too affected by Covid and self-isolation.

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- Arrangements for the start of Term 3 - nb date change for Year 7
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Arrangements for the start of Term 3

We are still planning and hoping that all students will be able to return as expected at the start of term. However, given the continued upsurge in Covid infections over the Christmas break, we are likely to be faced with:

1. A significant level of staff absence - this could mean that we simply don't have enough staff to cover all classes, in which case we will have to ask one or more year-groups to switch to learning 'from home', potentially at short notice. Our priority for face-to-face learning will be for Year 11 and 13; other year-groups could be asked to 'learn from home' on a rota basis (to reduce any impact on one particular year-group). Teachers would deliver 'live lessons' via Teams. We would always accommodate more 'vulnerable' students where being in school was a priority, and staff would be in contact with families accordingly. If this approach is needed, we will inform you as soon as we know of any potential disruption.
2. A significant level of student absence - this adds very considerable burden on teaching staff, who need to provide work for those isolating at home in addition to their usual teaching and planning load. As such, we will be moving to a 'centralised' system of remote learning resources for isolating students in Years 7-11 where students will have access to pre-set resources on Microsoft Teams. We would encourage students to follow their usual timetable to structure their day and to complete the work set in the time available. Students should also complete homework tasks to the best of their ability, although it is likely that some tasks may be harder to complete having not been in the relevant lesson. Absent students will not be penalised where this is the case.

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Preparing and organising resources for remote learning is a significant task. To enable teaching staff a little more time to create and organise these, the start of term for Year 7 will be delayed to Thursday 6th January (as for Years 8, 9, 10 and 12). Apologies for the relatively late notice of this change, but we have made this decision to ensure that the experience of self-isolating students is as good as it can be, given the likely higher numbers involved.

Assuming that we are able to open for all year groups, a reminder of the schedule for the start of term is as follows.

| | On site Covid test* | Start of Term |
|---------|---|---|
| Year 7 | Tue 4 th January | Now Thu 6 th January |
| Year 8 | Wed 5 th January | Thu 6 th January |
| Year 9 | Wed 5 th January | Thu 6 th January |
| Year 10 | Tue 4 th / Wed 5 th January | Thu 6 th January |
| Year 11 | Tue 4 th January | Wed 5 th January |
| Year 12 | Tue 4 th / Wed 5 th January | Thu 6 th January |
| Year 13 | Tue 4 th Jan | Tue 4 th Jan (for Y13 mock exams only) - NB no on site catering. |

*Please see separate attached document for a summary of testing times, but please also carefully read the full details here in our letter from 16th December:

https://www.gordanoschool.org.uk/_site/data/files/letters%20home/42BF9488591B1551ECE5BD1EC765D87C.pdf.

We will carry out the ‘on site testing’ as scheduled irrespective of whether all year groups are able to return as planned.

There is some ambiguity in the guidance about whether students who have tested positive in the last 90 days should now be LFD testing (including as part of the on-site testing). We have received conflicting advice and continue to seek clarification. In the meantime we have NOT scheduled these students for an on-site test due to the very low chance of being reinfected within 90 days and the higher chance of a ‘false positive’. We would advise that these students should carry out a lateral flow test at home if they have been in close contact of a positive case in the week before the start of term, and we’ll update parents as soon as we gain any more definitive advice.

In school Covid measures

The Department for Education has not issued any updated guidance for schools for the start of Term 3 and we now do not expect them to do so. As such, we will be confirming any changes to our current Risk Assessment and ‘Covid measures’ before the start of term (such as in the wearing of masks, cleaning regimes or year-group ‘bubbling’) and we will write to you on Tuesday to confirm this.

Changes to Self-Isolation Rules

You may have noted that the self-isolation rules for confirmed positive cases have now changed, which allows people to stop self-isolating on 'Day 7' if they have negative lateral flow tests on Days 6 and 7 (nb 'Day 0' is the date of the positive test). This is welcome in lots of ways, but will add a layer of complexity regarding the end of self-isolation and the return to school for students. Where students are not able to return after 7 days (due to continued positive LFD results) please ensure that you contact the school (svincent@gordanoschool.org.uk) to avoid any risk of absence being marked as unauthorised.

Reporting Covid test results

Please ensure that you report any results (and especially positive ones) via the Test Register system. This will give us an indication of the level of student absence at the start of term and enable us to manage attendance as effectively as possible.

We will write again on Tuesday with any further information or changes to the arrangements for the start of term.

We expect this to be an unpredictable time and it is likely that we will face some disruption to the continuity of education as the Omicron wave passes. We will do all we can to minimise impact and inform you of changes with as much warning as possible, but we are likely to have to continue to make some late changes based on an ever-changing situation. Your patience and support through this tricky time is hugely appreciated, just as you have demonstrated throughout the last couple of years. It makes a huge difference in our ability to navigate the current challenges.

In the meantime, wishing you and yours a very Happy New Year.

With best wishes.



Tom Inman
Headteacher