



The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust

Learning Communities, Inspired by Faith

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Spring Term Arrangements

I hope that this letter finds you and your family all safe and well. Today is the last day of term and I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support of our school communities and to reassure you of our plans for the Spring term.

It has been a challenging end to term, particularly as we learn more about the impacts of the Omicron variant. Leaders will continue to review existing contingency plans to ensure that we are well prepared to implement them and prepared for any possible changes in public health advice. You will remember that changes were sprung on schools by the government at very short notice last January and, although we are hoping for a full and normal return to school in the spring term, we are equally prepared for any operational changes which may be forced upon us.

We are currently finding that as staff in schools are absent or forced to isolate, it is particularly challenging to backfill these roles due to a critical shortage of supply teachers. I need to draw parents' attention to this challenge our schools are facing and that, whilst we will do whatever we can to protect face-to-face education on our return to school, we do expect some disruption in the spring term with the inevitable rise in staff absence.

In order to help manage the virus we will follow advice from the Department for Education and Public Health, namely:

- All staff and students (of secondary age and above) should continue to test, and importantly report those test results, twice weekly.
- Encourage parents and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before attending a school event.
- Strongly recommend the use of face coverings in classrooms and communal areas for secondary age and post-16 pupils, along with the use of face coverings by adults in all schools in communal areas, including on dedicated school transport.
- Staff will ensure windows are open in the classroom to facilitate good ventilation, as much as is practicably possible.
- Staff will reduce mixing between year groups and classes as much as possible.
- At the moment, educational trips and residential visits will not go ahead.

During the past two months, all three high schools have hosted the vaccination programme for students, and these have worked well. The government is currently surging its efforts to deliver the booster programme even more quickly than originally planned, in light of rising case rates and the new variant. Vaccinating young people is more important than ever for keeping them, their friends, family members and teachers as safe as possible. As we approach the winter holidays, take up of the booster jab is also critical for staff and eligible students to protect everyone from serious illness and provide the best defense possible. 12–15-year-olds who have not been vaccinated can book an appointment out of school on the National Booking System, and from 20 December those eligible for second doses will also be able to book.

I am extremely grateful to the staff in all BKCAT schools for everything they are doing to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, their work in managing pupils' health and wellbeing, and ensuring secure and safe learning environments have taken priority. Staff and pupil resilience in the face of the many challenges during the last 21 months, together with the continued commitment of staff to support our children and young people with their education and wellbeing through the disruption of the pandemic, is inspiring.

Thank you for your continued support of our school communities. Wishing you all a joyous Christmas with your families and friends, and best wishes for a peaceful 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Lesley Fitton
CEO

