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St Joseph's Pontefract, COVID-19 Update January 2022

Good morning everyone.

Following a week of unprecedented staff and pupil absence, I would like to share with you the key headlines:

As you are aware, Omicron is now the dominant COVID-19 variant in our area and cases are at an all-time high.

As always, we are doing everything we can to keep our community as safe as we possibly can and I have detailed more information below:

1. **Please continue to wear masks when you enter the school grounds** – especially at the busier pick up and drop off times. Masks are mandatory outside the reception area and for staff in all communal areas in school.
2. We know it is difficult at the busy pick up and drop off times at school, but **please could we ask that everyone practises social distancing** and leave the school grounds as soon as possible.
3. We are keeping the children in year groups wherever possible and have moved **all of our assemblies onto TEAMS for the immediate future, with only small numbers of children attending physically**. If necessary, we are being encouraged to mix groups of children to provide cover if required, **but this will be a last resort in our school**.
4. We have **several school visits/trips planned for this term**, however decisions as to whether these go ahead will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be made closer to the date of the individual events.
5. **If your child/children presents with any one of the 3 original symptoms of COVID below, they should have a lateral flow test** (from Tuesday 11th January) and may return to school immediately when they receive a negative test result.

- *New continuous cough - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if the person usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual)*

- *Fever (temperature of 37.8°C or higher) – the individual will also feel hot to touch on their chest or back*

- *A loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means the person has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.*



6. **If your child/ children tests positive for COVID-19**, they need to isolate for at least 7 days from the start of symptoms or from the test date if asymptomatic, but if they receive two negative LFT tests on day 6 and day 7 – taken 24 hours apart (or 2 consecutive days thereafter) **and they do not have a temperature**, they can return to school after receiving the second negative LFT test result. If the LFTs return positive on day 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 they can return to school after 10 days of isolation.
7. **If a household member tests positive**, the guidance now states that the other members of the household can attend school as long as they take LFT tests for 7 days and have a negative result. A PCR is no longer required officially but we appreciate that many of you would prefer to do this to ensure the rest of your family and friends remain safe, and we support this.
8. **We have had significant staff absence this week and have redeployed staff, asked staff to come in on their days off and used supply teachers (when available, which is rarely and therefore provides another challenge).** However, if we have several staff who are unable to attend work in a specific class, we may have to close a class and learning will be provided remotely on Google Classroom, our online learning platform. **This will always be a last resort for our school, as we would try to exhaust all possibilities for covering the class - as we have this week - before making any decision to move to remote learning.**

Thank you for taking the time to read the information above - we wish to keep everyone as safe and as healthy as possible. Your continued support and patience is greatly appreciated.

God bless and take care,

Mr Sandbach,

Head of School.