



4th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Start of Term Update – January 2022

Firstly can I wish everyone a happy New Year and say that I hope that you had a good Christmas. I am aware that for a good number of people the period was disrupted once again through COVID, this time with the increasing influence of the Omicron variant. I have watched, as others will have done, the figures of daily recorded infections rise over the past week or so and we will all continue to monitor this over the coming weeks.

We awoke on Sunday morning to read in the national newspapers and see elsewhere the decision being announced for **masks to be worn in secondary schools until the 26th January** in the first instance. Students at Chew Valley, along with other schools, have been wearing masks on transport to and from school as well as in our indoor space between lessons for some time now. Apart from those students who are exempt (we have a record of these which is shared with all staff), we are expecting students to wear masks indoors apart from when they are eating in the canteen.

We are asking for **interactions with parents and carers** to be via phone or via Microsoft Teams for the moment on most occasions rather than coming in for meetings although we will manage this on a case by case basis. We are continuing to hold assemblies with the mitigation of masks being worn and the Hall being ventilated although we will monitor this carefully. We are unfortunately having to **cancel our GCSE and A Level Presentation Evening** for students who sat their examinations during the summer of 2021 which was scheduled for this coming Thursday (6th January). We will also **move our forthcoming Year 9 Options Evening onto Zoom** and a further letter will follow in due course with details.

As the BBC website has reported, workplaces are being asked to plan for **absences of up to 25% of their employees at any one time**. We very much hope this is not the case; however if we are in a position where our numbers move upwards we will not be able to sustain teaching for all year groups on site. As a consequence, along with all secondary schools in the country, we may need to look to ask particular year groups to work at home for hopefully a short period. We would review our staffing in school and may well need to use the staff who are present to look after the students who are attending Chew Valley rather than teach their timetabled lessons online to those at home. We are continuing to review our package for online learning to make sure that students who were at home are able to access appropriate learning resources for their subjects should this situation arise. It is always difficult to make the decision as to which year group is not in school and I know that parents and carers will support us although I am aware that this will put pressure on families at this time.

Examinations are happening for the Sixth Form over the next few weeks. If students are not able to attend school due to the need to isolate then we will not be sending the examination papers home. The Sixth Form team will look to make arrangements once students have returned.

Can I remind everyone of our **request for students to lateral flow test before they return to school** on Wednesday and to continue to do this twice a week. A good number of students are in school today being tested before they return. This is a vital part of our risk assessment along with mask wearing and ventilation and is important so that we can try and maintain education in school as much as possible. We are currently updating our Risk Assessment with the areas covered above along with other aspects and a copy will be available to view on our website over the next couple of days.

The coming weeks are going to be unpredictable and we are going to need to make decisions throughout. As I have already said, I know that parents and carers will support us through this potentially continuing challenging time.

With very best wishes

Gareth Beynon
Headteacher