



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Parents/Carers,

UPDATE – DfE Coronavirus Guidance

I am writing to update you regarding new DfE guidance. This guidance has been issued in response to the very high number of confirmed cases of the Omicron variant as well as the sustained growth in case rates (data available [here](#)). As a result, I have updated our risk assessment to reflect updated DfE guidance and I can share the following key updates with you in anticipation of the start of term.

Coronavirus symptoms in children

Children can get coronavirus but they seem to get it less often than adults and it's usually less serious.

The main symptoms are:

- **a high temperature**
- **a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours**
- **a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal**

If your child has any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, even if they're mild:

1. **Do not send them into school**
2. Get a PCR test to check if they have COVID-19 as soon as possible. You can book this [here](#).
3. Your child should stay at home and not have visitors (self-isolate) until you get the test result – they can only leave home to have the test.
4. Inform the school by completing the Absence Form available on the [website](#) and [here](#).

Information on the changes to the self-isolation period

Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10-day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason. Individuals may now take lateral flow tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8.

If your child is required to self-isolate and subsequently takes two lateral flow tests, with negative results, and can return from day 8 then **you will need to email Mrs DeVido (Attendance Officer) to notify the school before your child returns:** LDeVido@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk


Daily testing for close contacts

Students identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take a lateral flow test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time. This guidance also applies to adults who are fully vaccinated.



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Burnmill Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7JG
01858 440770 office@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk

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Vaccination

On Wednesday 22 December, the government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed.

In response to the Omicron variant, the JCVI advised that a Pfizer booster vaccine should be offered to:

- children aged 12 to 15 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of immunosuppressed individuals, and those who are severely immunosuppressed and have had a third primary dose
- all young people aged 16 to 17 years old

More information regarding vaccination and young people is available [here](#).

Arrangements for testing in school and staggered return

Following my letter sent at the end of term, the plan for a staggered return remains in place. We have established an Asymptomatic Testing Site in the Main Hall to enable testing to take place for all students on their return to school next week. **Please note that all students are expected in full school [uniform/dress code](#).**

Tuesday 4th January (Teacher Training Day)	Year 11 Testing Starts: 10.00 a.m. Year 13 Testing Starts: 11.00 a.m. <i>Yr11/13 will go home following their test</i>
Wednesday 5th January	Year 7 Testing Starts: 8.45 a.m. Year 10 Testing Starts: 10.00 a.m. Year 12 Testing Starts: 11.00 a.m. <i>Year 11/13 in school from 8.45 a.m.</i> <i>Yr7,10,12 will stay in school following their test</i> <i>Year 8/9 lessons will take place on MS Teams</i>
Thursday 6th January	Year 8 Testing Starts: 8.45 a.m. Year 9 Testing Starts at 10.00 a.m. <i>Yr8 and 9 will stay in school following their test</i>

Students should arrive at the Main Hall via the Top Gate according to the schedule listed above. We will endeavour to process tests quickly but we advise that students should have coats and umbrellas in the event of wet weather as there may be queues. Please note that if you do not consent to your child receiving a test in school, they will be expected to attend lessons on the same day as their year group (above).

Students in Year 8 and 9 should prepare for an online learning day to take place on Wednesday 5th January by checking they can access their school email accounts before Tuesday. The first lesson will take place at 9.10 a.m. and will follow the established timetable (there will not be an expectation of a login for tutor time on this day). **Parents may use the following help sheet [here](#).** You may also contact this email for assistance with Remote Learning, please do so by Tuesday 4th January: parentsupport@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk.



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Face coverings

As you will know based on the widespread media [coverage](#) this morning, the government is temporarily recommending that face coverings are worn in classrooms and teaching spaces for students in year 7 or above, in light of the Omicron variant surge. This builds on the existing guidance that recommends face coverings in communal areas of all settings and this guidance will be in place until Wednesday 26th January, when 'Plan B' regulations are currently scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed.

As a result, we expect students to wear face coverings in lessons from Wednesday 5th January unless they have a medical exemption. We ask that you ensure that your child has a clean face covering ready for their first day of school next week and that you discuss this expectation with them in advance. Students will be informed via Satchel One and the Senior Leadership Team will visit lessons to support students with this routine.

Hygiene controls

We will continue to ensure good hygiene for all including the use of hand sanitising and respiratory hygiene reminders. We will keep occupied spaces well ventilated and maintain enhanced cleaning regimes. We will continue to follow public health advice whilst communicating regularly with parents and students.

At this time, we will also restrict access to the school site to reduce the risk of transmission from visitors. All assemblies will take place remotely until further notice and we will endeavour to provide separate spaces for year groups at lunchtimes as far as possible, within the limitations of the school buildings.

Remote learning

We want all Robert Smyth students to be in school because we know that we can give them the best educational experiences when they are with their teachers and their peers. However, we are realistic that the national data suggests that the spread of the Omicron variant will present a real challenge. The DfE have also recognised that the high case rates may have an impact on the availability of staff.

We will continue to set work for students who are self-isolating on Satchel One and we are prepared to deliver the curriculum remotely to larger groups if this becomes a necessity. Parents and students may wish to find out more about our Remote Learning Policy [here](#).

Examinations

The government has been clear that examinations and assessments should go ahead as originally planned.

January 2022

I hope that this allows you to prepare your child for their return to school next week. I do feel that we can all start this year by being resolutely positive. As a community, we have seen similar challenges before, and we have met them. The coming month will be another opportunity for us to come together and put the students first so that they get the best possible educational experiences. Thank you for your ongoing support and for preparing your child before they come back into school next week. I am grateful that we can rely upon your steadfast support. Whatever the scenario, our students come first.

Yours sincerely,

D Clary
Principal



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