



15 July 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

## Covid-19 Update: Moving to step 4

I write to provide an update on how the national easing of Covid-19 restrictions will impact your child. The Government has announced that we will move to Step 4 of the roadmap as of Monday 19 July. There are some significant changes to policy and practice that I would like to draw to your attention.

From next Monday, schools are no longer required to undertake contact tracing for close contacts of infected staff / students. The wording from the updated guidance states: *"From Step 4, close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace and education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts."*

The updated guidance also states that: *"From 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to **self-isolate** if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so."*

Throughout the pandemic, staff in College have worked hard to make sure that close contacts self-isolate. We currently have three cases of Covid reported to us in the last 24 hours in the school and we have asked all students and staff to self-isolate in line with current PHE guidance. It is possible some of these students have been asked to self-isolate until after Monday 19 July; they must still do this and stay at home until their period of self-isolation is complete.

The move to Step 4 enables us to make some further changes in school, which we will do from Monday. These are relatively minor at this stage; the current operation of the building works well and students are familiar with it. There is little to be gained through making large alterations so close to the end of the year. Please note the following points:

- We will remove the bubble areas on the front field at break and lunch. This will provide more space for the students to spread out. We will maintain the current canteen and eating arrangements as they are until September.
- We will close the [covid@mrc-academy.org](mailto:covid@mrc-academy.org) email address with effect from Monday. Please inform us of any positive covid cases through the normal attendance phone line and email address.
- The operation of one-way systems in the school will remain in place.
- Hand sanitiser must be used in every classroom as is currently the case and students may continue to wear masks if they wish to do so.
- Our risk assessment has been updated to reflect these changes has been updated and will be on our website from next week.

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The situation with regard to Covid changes rapidly, therefore, so must our response. It is possible that further restrictions may need to be introduced throughout the Autumn term. I hope this will not be the case and I hope the school will be open to all from September, with no restrictions in place at all.

We are required to test all students in the Autumn prior to their return to lessons. Mr Lloyd has written to all parents to request consent for this to take place. We will need to stagger students' return to school in September. Further detail about arrival times to school will be provided once consent permissions have been collated. Therefore, it is essential that all parents / carers update consent levels for Covid-19 testing in Arbor as a priority before the end of **Tuesday 20 July 2021**. Regardless of this, and as a broad brushstroke, we aim to bring the following year groups in on the following days:

Friday 3 September	- Year 7 & Year 12
Monday 6 September	- Year 8, Year 11 & Year 13
Tuesday 7 September	- Year 9 & Year 10

I am looking forward to a return to normality for our students in the new academic year. I am incredibly impressed with their resilience, hard work and tenacious attitude. They deserve great credit for this.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Edwards  
Principal