

5 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

I'd like to take this opportunity to provide some updated information regarding the start of the Spring Term.

Mrs Garlick, Head of Secondary, found out shortly before Christmas that she requires surgery and she will, therefore, be absent for much of this term while she recovers. During Mrs Garlick's medical leave of absence, Mr Ayres will become Acting Head of Secondary and Mrs Bateman will become Acting Deputy Head. I'm sure you will join us in wishing Mrs Garlick a speedy recovery and good luck to Mr Ayres and Mrs Bateman.

During this period, you should continue to communicate with school via the school office. We understand that it can be difficult to get through to us via telephone, we receive an extremely high number of calls throughout the day, and although we have tried to put measures in place to answer more of these, it can still be difficult to get to them all. Therefore, we would ask you to initially direct all queries via email and send this to: info@appletonacademy.co.uk in the first instance please. Your queries or concerns will then be directed to the most appropriate person, and we can ensure you receive a quicker response.

Unfortunately, the ongoing high Covid infection rate is still having an impact on pupils, families and staff and we are once again required to put measures in place to manage the risk to health and education. When considering these measures, we have reviewed government and local guidance, considered the local picture and reviewed what we know has worked in school during the last eighteen months to reduce the risk of infection. The latest government guidance covers the use of face coverings, changes to self-isolation, and preparation for remote learning (if it were to become necessary i.e. due to high levels of staff absence, school closure, or changes to national measures to manage Covid).

The measures we put in place as a school must be followed by all pupils, staff and visitors and have been devised to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid in school. We want to avoid further measures, such as a return to staggered starts to the school day, teaching in restricted zones, or pupils learning remotely from home. We know first-hand that these sorts of restrictions have been detrimental to pupils and have affected their education, mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, the measures we have put in place to reinforce protections from the spread of Covid are simple to follow and have little negative impact in comparison to the alternatives. We hope, therefore, that pupils and parents will support the school in ensuring that these are followed and the rules on site are adhered to.

Face Covering/ Masks

From the start of term, pupils in Secondary will need to wear a face covering/mask when moving around school, in the classroom, and in the dinner hall when not eating. The overwhelming majority of pupils follow this requirement and understand that this could prevent further disruption to their education. Those pupils who do not wear a mask will be required to follow social distancing measures for their safety, the safety of their peers, the safety of school staff, and to ensure the continuity of education. Refusal to comply, without valid reason or exemption, is likely to result in sanctions being imposed.

This does not apply to Primary aged children, however, pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 can wear a mask if they choose to do so.

In School Testing

All Secondary pupils for whom we have consent have been tested at the start of the school term. The testing introduced last term in science lessons will also continue and another 'in-school' test will be completed with Secondary pupils later in the week during a form session. This in-school testing has proven to be very effective in identifying asymptomatic cases and has significantly contributed to the reduced numbers of pupils testing positive overall. We will continue this for at least the next fortnight, and ideally for as long as the infection rate is high and LFT tests are available.

Changes to Rules – Self-Isolation

If your child tests positive for Covid, the general advice is that they must self-isolate for 10 days. However, as you will probably be aware, there is a slight change to this self-isolation period, as pupils (and others) can now return to school on day 8 if they test negative using a lateral flow test on both days 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. This applies as long as both tests are negative, they do not have a fever, and the tests have been taken at least 24 hours apart. If your child has tested positive for Covid, please send the confirmation email or text you receive from the NHS/Test and Trace to info@appletonacademy.co.uk. If your child does test negative on day 6 and day 7 of their isolation period, please also register the test results with the NHS, and when you receive your confirmation acknowledging those negative results, please send this to the same info@ email address, and we will then notify you that your child can attend school from day 8. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you are unsure.

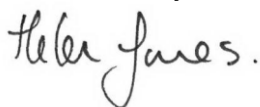
Remote Learning

While we will continue to provide a high-quality education for all pupils, there may be occasions where the usual teacher is not available, or a large number of staff are absent, which may affect our ability to cover classes. Please be aware that we may need to combine teaching groups, provide supervised remote learning onsite or introduce flexible attendance. Whilst these measures are not ideal, they may be unavoidable. The situation will be monitored carefully to reduce the impact on pupils and their learning.

It is clear that the coming half term in particular is likely to be challenging due to the ongoing pandemic and high case rates. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have queries or concerns.

Finally, we are looking forward to sharing the report from our recent Ofsted inspection with you as soon as we are able to do so. Ofsted have informed us that the report will be ready this week and as soon as it is, we will write to you again.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Helen Jones'.

Ms H Jones
Executive Headteacher