

04.01.2021

Dear parent/carer

I write to you today hoping that you will have had some time to relax with your family over the Christmas period. But I also know that for many, the continuing uncertainty and rumours in the press are stressful. The national situation has of course changed, with a new strain (the S-variant) which we know is more infectious.

You will undoubtedly have heard the Prime Minister's statement on Saturday December 19th in which he outlined the impact of a new strain of the virus which could be up to 70% more infectious. The Chief Medical Officer's statement published on Saturday December 19th about the new strain can be seen below:

Chief Medical Officer's Statement

This is clearly a very serious development and a rather difficult time for us all. More information about the new variant is provided later in this update.

Return to School

You will also undoubtedly have seen the Secretary of State's statement (earlier this week) in the House on the arrangements for the beginning of the Spring Term.

Secretary of State Statement

I know you will have many questions and I have attempted here to try to provide answers to some of the questions. **However, please do be aware (as you will have seen in the news) that the situation is very fluid and subject to change.**

- From **6th January**, all Year groups, 7 – 13 will receive all lessons remotely via Microsoft Teams and more information about this can be found later in this update. We will only provide on-site education to vulnerable children and children of critical workers during this week
- From **11th January**, Years 11 and 13 will return to school for face-to-face education for examination groups, this will also include vulnerable and critical worker children. Years 7 – 10 and Year 12 will continue with remote learning.
- From **18th January**, the expectation is that all secondary school pupils, years 7-13, will return to school for face-to-face education.

The graphic below helps to illustrate the phased return to school:

Year group	w/c 4 Jan	w/c 11 Jan	w/c 18 Jan
Exam years (years 11 and 13)	Prioritise remote education	Return to school	Continue at school
Primary (years 1-6)	Return to school with some local exceptions*	Continue at school with some local exceptions*	Continue at school with some local exceptions*
Secondary / college (years 7-10 and 12)	Prioritise remote education	Prioritise remote education	Full return to school with some local exceptions*
Primary / secondary vulnerable and critical worker	Return to school	Continue at school	Continue at school
Special school	Return to school encouraged	Continue at school	Continue at school
Alternative provision	Return to school	Continue at school	Continue at school

Online Learning

As I highlighted earlier, all year groups (7-13) will receive online Microsoft Teams lessons starting **Wednesday 6th January**. This will be a week 2 and students should follow their normal timetable. The lessons will be held on Teams at the following times:

- **Lesson 1 Start 9:30**
- **Lesson 2 Start 10:30**
- **Break 11:20-11:30**
- **Lesson 3 Start 11:30**
- **Lunch 12:20-12:55**
- **Lesson 4 Start 12:55**
- **Lesson 5 start 13:50**

There will be a short pause after each lesson for students and staff to leave one lesson before logging into the next. If a member of staff is ill and unable to deliver their lesson, then alternative work will be provided for that group through Satchel.

On week beginning **Monday 11th January** we expect to be welcoming Year 11 and 13 back into school following the current government guidance, with online learning continuing for other year groups in that week. Please make sure that your child has read the guidance below on accessing Teams lessons, this is the same guidance as we sent prior to the Christmas break.

Teams Student Guide

It is important students follow this guidance and attend sessions to enable them to get the best possible education during this period. Any questions should be addressed to your child's Leader of Learning.

Students of key workers will be able to attend school and access their Teams lessons on site. If you require this provision, please contact your child's Leader of Learning (LoL) and Mr H Palmer at the school and they will then get in touch. Could I also take this opportunity to recommend that where possible you send your child in with their own headphones and packed lunch. If your child is FSM, could you please indicate this to the LoL in your email.

Homework

For the duration of the remote learning period, homework will be set as usual in all subjects. Teachers will endeavour to ensure that students' experience of online lessons is as close as possible to normal lessons so, just as at other times, homework tasks will be essential for students to practise knowledge recall and complete longer written tasks and extension activities. All homework will be set on the Satchel platform and, as last term, can be closely monitored by parents using their individual accounts. If you or your child have difficulty logging into Satchel, please contact Mr Ramsey in the first instance.

(sramsey@copleston.suffolk.sch.uk)

Digital Devices

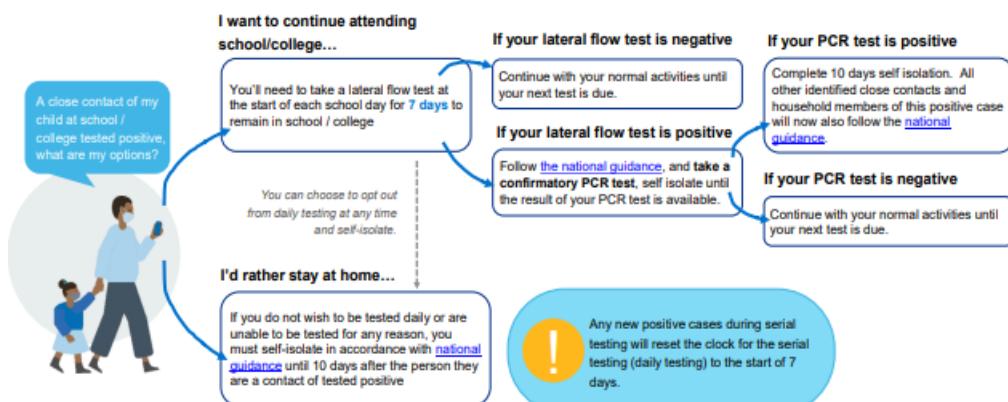
The school has a limited number of laptops available to loan to students who may otherwise struggle to access the remote lessons. We are aware that many students could be sharing devices with siblings or parents or may be using devices such as phones which may limit the use of PowerPoint slides or video clips used during the lessons. If you would like to borrow a laptop from the school for the duration of the remote learning period, please contact Mr Walker (pwalker@copleston.suffolk.sch.uk)

Mass Testing in Secondary Schools

I am sure you are aware of the Government's plans for a mass COVID-19 testing programme for schools, which is due to begin in January when staff and students return. There are three main components of the rapid coronavirus asymptomatic testing programme in schools:

- 1. Test as many secondary students on their return to school as possible:** When returning to their school students will be offered a 'lateral flow test'.
- 2. Carry out weekly testing of school staff:** Staff will be offered a 'lateral flow test' starting in January and on an on-going weekly basis.
- 3. Carry out daily contact testing of students and staff who are close contacts of a positive case:** Those identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive will be provided with daily testing for seven days. If they test negative on a daily basis, they can continue to attend school without having to self-isolate. This process is called **Serial Testing** and is explained in the diagram below:

A new approach known as 'serial testing' has been developed. This will allow those (pupils and staff) who are in 'close contact with' someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to return to school/college if they agree to be tested daily for 7 days.

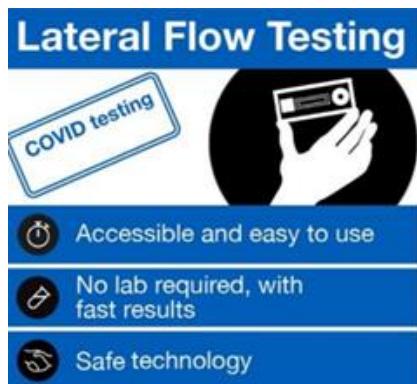


From w/c 4th January 2021, Copleston High School will begin testing all staff and students who wish to participate, using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'.

The tests will be conducted on-site in the Sports Hall. The test is voluntary, but we would encourage all students to take it. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms, so by testing we will help to stop the virus spread and help keep our school open as safely as possible.

About the lateral flow tests

- Tests will be performed free of charge by trained Copleston staff and will consist of a quick and simple swab of their nose and throat.
- Results take around half an hour from testing and will be shared directly with staff and students participating. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.
- We know these tests work – in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be over 99% accurate.



Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school safely.

This BBC news article provides a summary of how mass asymptomatic testing works:

BBC News Article

We are actively working on a testing schedule which supports the phased return as outlined by the Government. Our current aim is to begin testing all staff and students who want to participate towards the end of the week commencing 4 January 2021.

We will be writing to you to gain parental consent and once have received consent, we will be in touch again with precise details on when tests will take place for your child

Setting up this rapid testing programme, is an exceptionally complex and challenging operation; we thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding.

Mask Wearing at Copleston High School

Recent figures for the spread of the Covid-19 virus have been impacted by a new variant which is faster spreading. This has resulted with Ipswich being placed into Tier 4, the highest current level of restrictions, in order to help prevent the spread of the virus. However, the figures are rising and we must all do as much as we can to help limit the spread.

Coronavirus in the UK



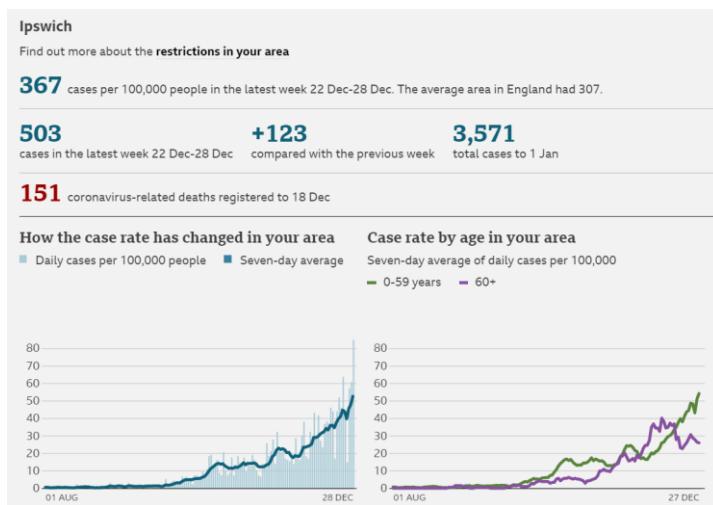
We strongly believe measures designed to limit the transmission of the virus must be implemented to help increase the optimum safety for all.

Therefore, at Copleston High School, we have reviewed the wearing of masks and the Governors and Trust have taken the decision to make mask wearing compulsory for all students and staff in communal areas and classrooms from the January 4th 2021 until February half term. This will be kept under regular review, initially at an Extraordinary Trust Board meeting to be held on Monday 1 February to decide what happens after half term.

All staff, students and visitors to Copleston High School site will be required to wear facemasks/coverings in all settings (including classrooms), communal areas and offices where more than one person works. There is an exception for those with medical/specific grounds where parents will need to send a letter explaining reasons for not being able to wear a mask. Lanyards will be worn by those who are exempt.

Whilst testing will commence from January 2021 in schools and will provide some answers, there is still a huge amount we can do to protect ourselves during this time.

We are also in an area where the figures are rising which makes the decision to wear masks even more pertinent:



Masks do not need to be worn in PE lessons but at all other times students and staff are to wear masks in classrooms and around the buildings and school site. Of course, when eating and drinking masks can be removed. Staff will be provided with clear masks to help those with hearing impairments when required. Any person exempt from wearing a mask must wear the required lanyard.

To understand why facemasks work, it is important to look at how the virus that causes Covid-19 spreads in the first place.

Once it has infected someone, the Covid-19 virus responsible for the disease hijacks their cells to replicate itself. As it multiplies, these new virus particles then burst out of the cells and become suspended in the bodily fluids in our lungs, mouth and nose. When an infected person coughs, they can send showers of tiny droplets – known as aerosols – filled with the virus into the air.

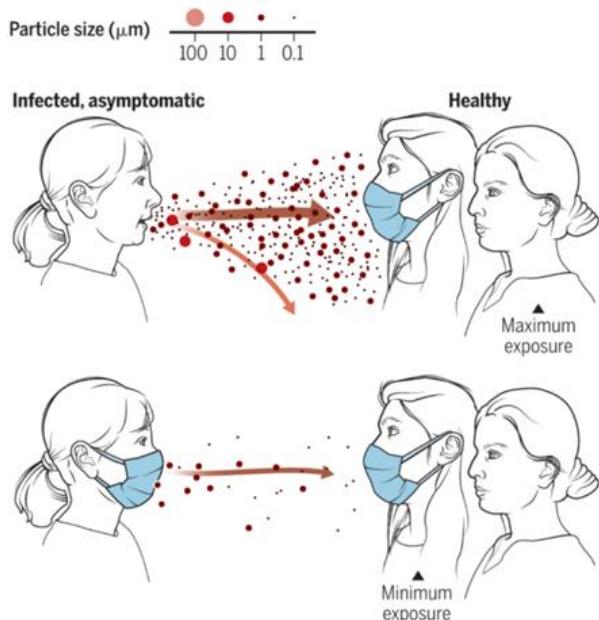
A single cough **can produce up to 3,000 droplets**. There are fears the virus can also be **spread simply through speaking**. One recent study showed that we **spray thousands of droplets** invisible to the naked eye into the air just by uttering the words “stay healthy”. Clearly in a school environment there is a lot of speaking taking place.

Once out of a mouth, many of the larger droplets will settle very quickly onto nearby surfaces while smaller ones **remain suspended in the air** for hours, where they can be breathed in.

Thus, respiratory infections such as Covid-19 occur through the transmission of virus-containing droplets and aerosols exhaled from infected individuals during breathing, speaking, coughing, and sneezing. These aerosols can accumulate, remain infectious in indoor air for hours, and be easily inhaled deep into the lungs. The image below shows this in more detail:

Masks reduce airborne transmission

Infectious aerosol particles can be released during breathing and speaking by asymptomatic infected individuals. No masking maximizes exposure, whereas universal masking results in the least exposure.



We understand that wearing masks is not particularly comfortable but with a new variant of the Covid-19 virus and with soaring figures in our local area (see chart below) we believe this is an essential measure in order to make Copleston as safe as possible for everyone. We will continue to optimise ventilation in rooms as an additional measure and hand sanitisers are still to be used at every opportunity by all as they move around the building. We will also still continue to operate quiet and focussed classroom environments to help maximise safety as well.

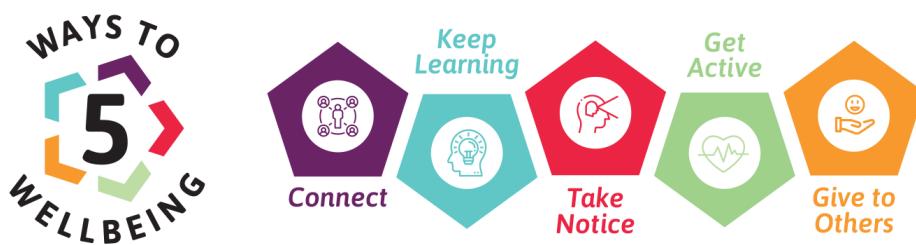
We thank you for your ongoing support at this difficult time. Students have been exceptional in their responses to our safety measures over the last few months and we know they will continue to appreciate and support our decisions as you are.

Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing

Covid-19 has affected much of what everyone does. However, we can't just stop what we need to do because of Covid related stress. We still must go on with our jobs and raising our families. Self-care including taking a breather is important, but part of self-care is reaching out to others, even professionals in some cases to get you back on your feet, not hide in the darkness of your mind unable to function for weeks or months on end. We need flexibility, understanding and creativity to get through these darker times. We still must do our best every day, work just as hard as you would have, and choose resilience over fear and breakdowns.

Biden said there will be a "dark winter" ahead, but through resilience and perseverance in the face of this adversity, rather than panic and fragility, we can still shine light this time of turmoil.

As I have mentioned in previous updates, engaging with activities linked to the internationally renowned 5 Ways to Wellbeing is a great way to promote positive mental health and wellbeing during this challenging time. The underpinning concept of the 5 Ways is that wellbeing is comprised of two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. The Five Ways to Wellbeing are evidence-based public mental health messages. They aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of each one of us. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are:



Connect It is important to keep connected with your loved ones whilst social distancing and isolating.

Keep learning Research shows that learning new skills can help improve your mental wellbeing by raising self-esteem, helping to build a sense of purpose and helping you to connect with others

Take notice Pay attention to the present moment – to your own thoughts and feelings, and to the world around you.

Be active Physical activity makes you feel good. You can exercise at home no matter your level of mobility and fitness

Give Acts of giving and kindness can be incredibly rewarding

I would also like to remind you of some of the resources that are available to help you in supporting your children with promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

- The NSPCC has published guidance to support parents and young people at this challenging time. Please view this guidance below:

[Go to NSPCC Guidance](#)

- The Anna Freud centre have also produced some excellent guidance for adults to support children and young people who are worried or anxious.

[Go to Anna Freud](#)

- Young Minds have a dedicated page for parents to help them to support their children during the coronavirus pandemic.

[Young Minds](#)

- The Samaritans have put together some tips and resources to support positive mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak:

[Samaritans Guidance](#)

Five Ways to Stay Positive over the Winter

Now Christmas has given way to January and the long dark winter months are here, some of the country's leading mental health experts say there are simple things that we can do to give ourselves a lift during this difficult time. Here are some of their tips:

1. Get moving

- Exercise triggers the release of endorphins into the bloodstream, relieving pain and producing a feeling of well-being. Research by Dr Stubbs has also shown that exercise also increases electrical activity in the emotional processing areas of the brain, particularly the hippocampus and the pre-frontal cortex.

2. Stop over-thinking

- It's perfectly normal to worry, but many of our worries never materialise. Danger is "over-encoded in our brains", says Professor Wild. "You can make yourself feel much calmer if you recognise that you're over-thinking, stop and focus on facts."

3. Set a new target

- Setting a new goal or target, can really help pull you through. That could be a big project like learning a language or something as small as trying out a new recipe.
- Learning to do new things is frequently how we acquire self-worth.
- Goal-motivated behaviour is one of the most fundamental ways that we operate.

4. Talk it over

- Covid-19 has made it a lot harder to be with others in person, and winter can make it harder still. That's a big issue for millions of people and the mental health consequences for some will be serious, so it's a good idea to maximise the little social contact that is available.
- Talking things through with someone who can help you reframe your problems, and help you move through them can be much more helpful.

5. Do it badly

- Don't wait to do things perfectly at the right time on the right day. That's even more important in winter when gloomy weather might make you think twice about doing something.
- Do things and accept that they might initially be done badly. When you do that, most of the time the results are actually not that bad - and they're almost always better than doing nothing.

The link to the full article can be found below:

Five Ways to Stay Positive

Concluding Remarks

Finally, I would like to say thank you for all your support of the measures we have put in place at Copleston to keep our community safe. News headlines that "tens of millions follow the rules" are understandably less exciting than stories of police raids on raves and other infringements. But we need to beware implying that the actions of a minority represent the behaviours of the entire population. Modelling good compliance is the responsibility of us all and this is a huge strength of our school. So as we start to practise our new year's resolutions, let this collective support of each other continue to be at the top of all of our lists, and let this be the resolution that we work hardest to keep.

I read recently in a news article that we have an individualistic society and it's too much of a stretch for most people in the UK to do something for collective benefit even when they are part of that collective. This is not my experience of people and certainly not my experience of the students and parents associated with Copleston. It is a great privilege to be able to work with parents who are incredibly supportive as it makes such a difference to the running of the school. I sincerely thank you for this.

The hope on the horizon is the vaccine and it is certainly good news that the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved. It seems a strange thing to wish you a happy new year, so I'll end by saying that I hope the new year signals the beginning of an end to this virus. May 2021 be a better year for all of us.

With my very best wishes

Andy