



Blue Coat Church of England Academy

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Website: www.bluecoatacademy.org
Principal: Mr D Smith

31st January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

Covid-19 Update

We continue to operate in very uncertain and challenging circumstances. As a school, we are endeavouring to maintain the full range of our curriculum and programme of extra curricular activities. We have had an increased number of positive COVID cases amongst both students and staff since we returned after Christmas. We have endeavoured to keep things as normal as possible which has involved considerable flexibility from staff and the engagement of much higher numbers of agency staff than normal. The positive response from students is to their considerable credit and with everyone's continued support I would hope that we can operate as normally as possible.

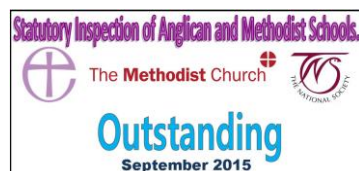
The case rate across Walsall continues to be very high with only the very early signs that the situation is beginning to improve. The high case rate locally along with relatively low rates of vaccination among this age group has resulted in additional measures being recommended. It is with this in mind that Walsall Public Health have asked me to consider implementing additional control measures in school. I have included a letter from the Director of Public Health below. We will continue to review on a weekly basis but for the foreseeable future, we will continue to implement the following measures:

- All staff, visitors and all students will be required to wear a face covering in all communal areas unless exempt. This includes when moving between classrooms and when in the Dining Hall (except when eating and drinking).
- School Reception is currently closed to external visitors and parents/carers. Please telephone during school hours or email postbox@bluecoatacademy.org with any queries. If a parent/carers needs to pick up a child during the school day, they will be asked to wait outside. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.
- Any visits out of school will be to COVID-secure premises only.

We will also continue to ensure that all staff and students sanitize their hands as they enter the building and regularly throughout the day, all rooms will be well ventilated and enhanced cleaning routines will be maintained.

It is our intention to return to face to face Parents'/Carers' Evenings as soon as possible but while the current restrictions remain in place, we will continue to operate online. We do have to make decisions on how events will operate well in advance to allow the practical arrangements to be made. With this in mind the following events will operate virtually:

- Year 9 Options Information Evening – Thursday 3rd February 2022
- Year 8 Parents'/Carers' Evening – Thursday 17th February 2022
- Year 10 Parents'/Carers' Evening – Thursday 10th March 2022



Regular Testing & Vaccination

I would continue to ask for your support to ensure that your child is taking a lateral flow test twice a week. Test kits will again be made available for students to pick up today – these are again the kits which only require nasal swabs. Instructions for use are included inside each pack.

The vaccinations administered in school on Tuesday last week went very smoothly and the NHS staff were again full of praise for the way students conducted themselves. Take up is however relatively low and I would ask that you give careful consideration to taking up the offer of a vaccine at the walk-in facility in the Saddlers Centre in Walsall Town Centre. Rates of vaccination are one of the key measures used by the Public Health team when considering when additional control measures are required.

Further information on vaccinations can be found on the school website:

<https://www.bluecoatacademy.org/parents-carers/covid-19-vaccinations>

Term Dates 2022/23

Some parents/carers have requested confirmation of the term dates for next academic year. The provisional dates are listed below, there will be some minor adjustments once training dates are confirmed.

Autumn term 2022

Term starts: Monday 5 September 2022

Half term holiday: Monday 24 October 2022 to Friday 28 October 2022

Term ends: Friday 16 December 2022

Spring term 2023

Term starts: Tuesday 3 January 2023

Half term holiday: Monday 20 February 2023 to Friday 24 February 2023

Term ends: Friday 31 March 2023

Summer term 2023

Term starts: Monday 17 April 2023

Half term holiday: Monday 29 May 2023 to Friday 2 June 2023

Term ends: Tuesday 25 July 2023

Yours faithfully



D. Smith
Principal



Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub, Children Services

Date: 25 January 2022

Our Ref: STG/

Telephone: 01922 650334

Email: Kulvinder.kaur@walsall.gov.uk

Dear Parent / Carer,

RE: Walsall guidance on face coverings and additional measures in educational settings

The Government has announced Plan B restrictions will be lifted, effective from Thursday 27 January 2022. This includes removing the requirement to wear face coverings in communal areas for all school staff and pupils in secondary schools and further education.

Directors of Public Health continue to have the authority to recommend additional measures to manage local outbreaks¹.

In Walsall, although we have seen the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 reduce slowly over the past seven days, the rates remain extremely high, including those aged 5-16 years old. We continue to have some of the highest levels we have seen in the borough at any stage during the pandemic.

I have contacted Walsall head teachers and principals to recommend education settings in Walsall continue the use of face coverings over the nose and mouth on and after 27 January 2022, where they have (a) positive case(s), for:

- **All staff and visitors (nursery schools, primary, secondary, SEN, college and university) in communal areas, unless exempt;**
- **All secondary and further education pupils in communal areas, unless exempt; and**
- **Children and young people aged 11 and over who use school or public transport, unless exempt.**

Face coverings are not required to be worn:

- **in classrooms;**
- **by children in primary schools. Health advice is that under 11's are exempt from wearing face coverings; or**
- **by staff, visitors or pupils aged 11 and over when an education settings has no confirmed cases of COVID-19**

¹ [Contingency Framework: Education Settings \(January 2022\)](#)



This is a temporary measure whilst case rates remain high. I will continue to keep the situation under review and will inform education settings as soon as our local guidance changes.

A range of evidence indicates that face coverings are effective in contributing to reducing the spread of COVID-19 in public and community settings.

I would like to thank you all for the efforts you continue to make during this difficult time by wearing face coverings, distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene. I hope that you understand the need for additional caution and my advice to continue to follow COVID-secure measures at this time.

I also want to remind parents and carers if anyone has any symptoms of COVID-19 or feels unwell they should not send their child to school. They must self-isolate and book to take a free PCR test as soon as possible. Anyone who tests positive must self-isolate.

If you or your child has to self-isolate due to COVID, then you may be eligible for self-isolation payments. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>

Everyone aged 12 and over can now get a 1st and 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. A booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is available for everyone aged 16 and over.

The Saddlers Vaccination Centre, Bradford Mail, Walsall, WS2 9NW remains the only place where 12 – 15 year olds can be vaccinated outside of the school based vaccination programme.

Anyone aged over 16 can attend one of the other vaccination sites, such as local GPs, pharmacies, community venues and large vaccination centres. Many of the sites are drop-ins so no appointment is needed. Find out where you and your child can get vaccinated <https://blackcountryandwestbirmccg.nhs.uk/your-health-services/health-advice/covid-19-vaccination>

It is also important for pupils in secondary school and further education to **continue with twice weekly symptom-free testing** using a lateral flow device. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

The COVID-19 case rate in the borough and the impact on Walsall education settings continues to be monitored very closely.

Your child's education setting will continue to keep you updated using their normal communication channels.

Thank you for your continued support.

Stephen Gunther

Director of Public Health