



# Montgomery Academy

An Academy within the Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Exec. Headteacher: Mr S.Cox BSc Hons MA (Ed) NPQH

Headteacher: Mr S. Careless BSc MSc NPQH

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4th January 2022

## **Newly published guidance and Montgomery contingency plans**

Dear Parent/carer,

I hope you all had a restful Christmas break and your families have not been impacted too greatly by the recent effects of the pandemic. The latest infection numbers across the country are very high. The impact of the more infectious Omicron variant means that we feel that some further disruption to schooling this term is to be expected, such as further student and staff absence. New guidelines have been published in December and this week that I need to make you aware of. I also need to discuss how we may need to respond to significant case numbers amongst staff or students.

### The wearing of face-masks

As you are aware before Christmas that all staff and students, unless medically exempt, were expected to wear face masks in all communal areas of school. We were all very impressed with how mature students were in accepting this restriction. New guidance published by the government this weekend has tightened the expectations further in that face-masks should also be worn in classrooms for a temporary period, whilst the infection rates continue to be high. The initial date given is until the 26th January, though this is obviously subject to change.

This policy is outlined in the latest version of the "Schools COVID-19 operational guidance", the link for which is given below if you would like to read it.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1044530/Schools\\_guidance\\_Jan\\_22.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044530/Schools_guidance_Jan_22.pdf)

I know that face-masks in classrooms are not ideal, yet hopefully this only for a short while. What we must do is take as many steps as we can to reduce possible transmission whilst maintaining high quality learning as much as possible. Therefore, we ask for your support in this measure, except where students have a medical exemption. Our expectation is that all students who are not medically exempt will wear a mask in class and communal areas.

### 'Minor symptoms' policy

You will remember that following Public Health advice before Christmas we were operating a policy where any student who had any minor symptoms such as flu-like symptoms or sickness/diarrhoea was asked to stay at home and book a PCR test. Given that local infection rates in Blackpool are double what they were in the last few weeks of the Autumn term and that NHS Blackpool Trust declared a critical incident yesterday, we feel that it is logical to continue this policy into the new term. Therefore, parents will be asked to come and collect any student who presents minor symptoms in school.

### 7 day LFT testing for close contacts of positive Covid cases

Just before Christmas, the guidance around close contacts changed to say that any close contact of a positive case, that is showing no symptoms, can continue to work or go to school if they have a negative LFT result each day for 7 days. This applies to all children aged 5 to 18 years, regardless of their vaccination status. Close contacts are now only identified by NHS Test & Trace and not by the school.



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## Reduction in the isolation period for positive cases in certain situations

The final guidance change has been regarding the 10 day isolation period.

People who receive negative LFT results on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period – with tests taken 24 hours apart – will no longer have to self-isolate for the full 10 days. This does not apply to unvaccinated adults.

The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period. Those who leave self-isolation on or after day 7 are strongly advised to limit close contact with other people in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, work from home and minimise contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID- 19. The DfE have clarified today that this does not apply to schools so students who have two negative LFT results can return to school on day 8 if they no longer have a temperature/fever.

## 90 day rule for testing changed

The guidance on testing with Lateral Flow Test after being Covid positive has changed. Previously it was the case that anyone who had tested positive was advised not to use a Lateral Flow Test for up to 90 days. This now only applies to PCR tests. Therefore, if your son or daughter tested positive for Covid longer than 10 days ago and they no longer have a temperature/fever, then they should still be testing twice weekly with LFTs.

## School contingency plans

I feel that it is a good idea to go through possible contingency plans for the continuation of learning if Montgomery suffers significant levels of staff absence or Covid outbreaks amongst students. You may have seen that all employers in the country have been asked to plan for possible staff absence levels of up to 25%.

Last term we did see high levels of staff absence. We were proud that we managed to stay open for all year groups throughout the Autumn term, though we did so by combining some classes for specific periods, putting 2 or 3 classes in the Assembly Hall or Futures Room. We may need to implement these strategies again this half-term. However, if staff absence levels mean that we cannot safely have all children in school for face-to-face teaching then we may need to move a year group to remote learning. Which year groups may depend on which year groups are suffering the most positive cases at the time, though we would look to prioritise Years 7 and 11. If the reduced staffing means that we cannot have all year groups in for an extended period of time we would look to rotate year groups that are working remotely, so that one year group is not adversely affected. These situations are worst-case scenarios, but I thought it would be best to be open about how we would possibly manage such situations, even though each situation will be quite different.

As I write today, we have 11% of staff absent. If this figure was to increase further in the next few weeks then we would need to start to consider moving a year group to remote learning.

We will ensure that vulnerable students and children of critical workers will be offered a place in school if their year group is moved to remote learning; unless the student is showing any symptoms.



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## Remote learning reminders

If your son or daughter has to move to remote learning for any reason such as testing positive, having to self-isolate or their year group being asked to work at home then it is important that they (and you if they need support) are aware of the codes to access Google Classroom.

Here is a reminder of the Google Classroom Codes for each year group in 2021-2022:

Year 7 - 5tw4aoi

Year 8 - 6zyfx4z

Year 9 - hsh7lbe

Year 10 - 3mtdjys

Year 11 - 53i4kck

More information can be found on our website at

<https://www.montgomeryschool.co.uk/remote-learning>

Or using the 'Remote Learning Resources' on our homepage.

## Lateral Flow Test supply

We gave out the latest box of 7 LFTs to students on Friday 17th December. This means that the 6th of the 7 tests should be used this coming weekend. We ordered more LFTs from the government supply chain before Christmas, though they have not arrived, as yet. We do not have enough boxes in stock to issue a further pack to every student though we can split boxes if needed to ensure any student that does not have a test for this weekend has one. As soon as we get a delivery we will issue them to students.

Reading this and acknowledging that the daily case numbers announced yesterday were over 200,000 it is clear that all members of the Montgomery Family will need to work together just as well as we did last year; to ensure that face-to-face learning is maintained for all year groups over the coming weeks. We look forward to your continued support.

Regards

S. Careless