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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and your family are keeping well.

With news of the new national restrictions, I wanted to take this time to update you on new processes we will be implementing around face-coverings and testing, following the latest updates to government guidance.

We are now asking for face coverings to be worn in communal areas in all settings by staff, visitors and students, unless they are exempt. Similarly, students should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport, unless they are exempt.

Some people may be exempt from wearing a face covering and so if your child is exempt and you have not already informed the school, please do contact us as soon as you can. In light of those who are exempt, we also want to stress the importance of students being sensitive to individual circumstances when there are instances that peers may not be wearing a face covering.

In addition to this, I thought it would be helpful to provide an update on new guidance around Covid testing in the academy. In line with guidelines from the Department for Education, when students return to the academy in January, they will be offered one test onsite and can return to the classroom if the result is negative. They will then be encouraged to take a further test at home 3-4 days after. Meanwhile, **students and staff are encouraged to continue to use lateral flow device (LFD) tests twice weekly.**

This is in efforts to keep Covid-19 out of schools and reduce transmission. If your child is unable to test at home, please let us know and **we will be able to support them.**

The current guidance on contact tracing and isolation remains in place - which means that close contacts of anyone with a positive Covid result should take PCR tests but do not need to isolate unless they are over 18 and unvaccinated. The exception is for close contacts of suspected or confirmed Omicron cases, who will be asked to isolate for 10 days.

I appreciate these latest guidance updates may have caused some concern for some of you, and I thank you in advance for your ongoing support, understanding and cooperation as we continue to navigate this period. I hope that this is a helpful update in terms of clarifying what is happening, and please be assured that the academy is continuing to do everything we can to protect the health and wellbeing of our students and wider community.

I would also encourage any parents/carers and/or students with any concerns or who would like to discuss any of the above further, to get in touch with the academy directly so that we can support.

Yours faintfully,

Mrs C Robson
Principal
Ormiston Maritime Academy

