Carmel College

COVID Update 3rd January 2022

As you will have heard on the news, the new ‘Omicron’ variant of coronavirus is a cause for concern nationally and on Wednesday 8th December, the Prime Minister announced the implementation of Plan B of the COVID-19 response to reduce transmission and the pressure on the NHS. This letter gives an update on the measures currently in place at college.

The timetable will continue as normal. This means that students should continue to attend all the sessions on their timetable. We will continue to do everything we can to limit any disruption to learning.

Remember though to stay at home if you feel unwell with any of the symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, and book a PCR test. Please let college know the reason for your absence and the result of the PCR test.

The guidance around self isolation following a positive test is changing quite rapidly at the moment and there is some variation in the guidance given by different government departments- if you do have a positive result - please plan to self isolate for at least 7 days - college will inform/update you on your return to college procedure.

Face coverings
Face coverings should continue to be worn by students, staff and visitors in communal areas, unless exempt. Students must also wear a face covering when traveling on public transport or on dedicated transport to and from college.

From the 1st of January the Government has now changed the guidance to state that all secondary and college students need to wear face coverings in classrooms - we will allow some flexibility around this and allow breaks and periods where masks can be removed for short periods- if you are exempt please ask for a discrete yellow identifier that can be put on your ID - this will ensure you are not constantly asked about a face covering - we would allow a visor to be worn.

Your support with wearing face coverings is appreciated. There have been a small number of students who need to be asked repeatedly to wear one. Remember, wearing a face covering protects others. We have some members of the college who are extremely vulnerable so we ask all students to respect others and wear a face covering in the recommended situations.

Please remember, students are expected to bring their own face coverings and make sure they are worn correctly, covering both your mouth and nose.
**IMPORTANT:** Students should complete a lateral flow home test before returning to college this week - students should take one self-test at home either in the evening or morning before they return and report the result to the NHS via the app or the Covid result website. Students should then continue with twice-weekly tests.

If you report a test result via the NHS app/Covid Reporting this is also automatically added to your online Covid passport which is becoming increasingly required to enter sports events, hospitality events and concerts etc.

**Do I have to self-isolate as a close contact?**

From Tuesday 14th December, a new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 is being introduced (including until the end of this term). All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 - whether Omicron or not - should take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days instead of self-isolating. Daily testing by close contacts will help to slow the spread of COVID-19.

This advise/guidance is under review so please contact college if you are a close contact and we will advice you on the actions required.

**Vaccinations**

We are pleased with the number of students taking up the vaccine service at the college, coordinated by the NHS. Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect the individual who has been vaccinated and those around them. We encourage everyone who is eligible to have the vaccine. Information about pop up vaccination clinics are available on the NHS ‘grab a jab’ web site. Anyone over the age of 18 years and 6 months who is not vaccinated, must isolate in line with government guidelines if they are a close contact of a positive case.

Thank you for continuing to follow all the guidance in place to minimise the risk of transmission. It is particularly important that we all remain vigilant at this time when the impact of the new Omicron variant is unknown.

**January Assessments**

We have a busy month ahead with Years 12 and 13 internal assessments and a number of external applied general exams and assessments - these are all planned to run as scheduled - so please continue to prepare for them.

**Year 0** - We are still awaiting the full guidance from the Government re Higher Education settings and guidance from the University - the Year 0 team will update if anything changes - but for now we plan to start the term as planned.

**And finally...**

Can i wish everyone all the best for 2022 - looks like we have another few challenging weeks ahead once again - but we will tackle it in our Carmel way and I’m confident together we will keep Carmel open and do our very best to provide an outstanding experience to all our college community.

Mike