



The Oak-Tree Group of Schools

Head Office: 6-8 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA

Tel: 020 8508 3109

Twitter: [@oaktreeschools](https://twitter.com/oaktreeschools)

Email: info@oaktreeschools.co.uk

Website: www.oaktreeschools.co.uk

Group Managing Principal

Mr Matthew Hagger B.A. (Hons), M.Ed., PGCE

4 January 2022

Dear Parents

Re: Return to School on Thursday

I hope you had a good Christmas with your families – Happy New Year! As we prepare to return to school on Thursday, I thought it might be helpful to confirm the latest Covid-19 actions that we are required to put into place.

The Department for Education has released the latest set of operational guidelines for schools to help reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. The measures we will be following, in addition to those provided by the Local Authority, all include the Omicron variant. They are outlined below and summarised in the Government's publications:

- [Schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance](#) (updated January 2022)
- [Guidance for parents and carers about schools](#) (updated December 2021)
- [Guidance for households with Covid-19 Infection](#) (updated December 2021)

Testing

Children of all ages should continue to test at least twice each week, ideally on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. This will help to reduce the risk of the virus unknowingly entering the school community – especially given the increasing number of asymptomatic cases we saw in school towards the end of the Autumn Term.

All children should test on Wednesday evening in advance of Thursday morning's return. Please report any positive results only to the usual 'covid@' email address.

The government will continue to provide Lateral Flow Device tests for secondary children, and we gave out sufficient supplies at the end of term for twice weekly testing over the Christmas break. We will distribute more kits in school later this week.

Although Lateral Flow Device tests are not provided by the Department for Education for primary children, you can order test kits [here](#).

In-School Testing for Senior Pupils (Normanhurst and Braeside)

We are required to conduct one supervised in-school Lateral Flow Device test for all pupils in Year 7 and above on Thursday morning. This will be in addition to Wednesday evening's home test so that we can prevent the virus from spreading while the testing is being carried out. As before, tests will be administered by school staff who have received the appropriate training. If there is a positive result, parents will be contacted to collect their child so they can start the required isolation as soon as possible.

We already have parental consent to conduct the in-school testing from the previous occasion at the start of the Autumn Term. We will contact the parents of children who have joined us since then, as well as any parents who did not give their consent, tomorrow. The government asks that the tests are taken even if somebody has tested positive within the last 90 days.

Covid-19 Testing for Staff

As previously, all staff will test twice each week with home test kits that will be issued to them. Nearly all of our staff have received both vaccinations and boosters.



Braeside School

130 High Road, Buckhurst Hill
Essex IG9 5SD
020 8504 1133

Braeside School is the trading name of Braeside School Ltd, registered in England to 6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA
Company no: 0783067



Coopersale Hall School

Flux's Lane, Epping
Essex CM16 7PE
01992 577133

Coopersale Hall School is the trading name of Coopersale Hall School Ltd, registered in England to 6 Albion Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 4RA
Company no: 3524644



Normanhurst School

68-74 Station Road
North Chingford E4 7BA
020 8529 4307

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Company no: 9380841



Oaklands School

8 Albion Hill, Loughton
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020 8508 3517

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Group Bursar:
Mrs S Hewitt



Tracing Close Contacts

NHS Test and Trace will work with a positive case and/or their parent to identify close contacts. Contacts from a school will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case or their parent specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact.

From 14 December 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 16 years identified as a contact of someone with Covid-19 should take a Lateral Flow Device test every day for 7 days and continue to attend school as normal, unless they have a positive test result. Children under 5 years do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

Daily testing of close contacts applies to all contacts who are:

- fully vaccinated adults, ie people who have had 2 doses of an approved vaccine
- all children aged 5 to 16 years, regardless of their vaccination status
- people who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

The government's guidance about NHS Test and Trace contact tracing is available [here](#).

Self-Isolation and Ending Self-Isolation Early

If you develop Covid-19 [symptoms](#), you must stay at home and self-isolate immediately. You should [arrange to have a PCR test](#) as soon as possible. If this PCR test result is positive, you must continue to self-isolate. You should do this even if you have received one or more doses of vaccine. If you do not have Covid-19 symptoms, but you have a positive PCR test result, you must also stay at home and self-isolate.

Your isolation period starts immediately from when your symptoms started, or, if you do not have any symptoms, from when your positive LFD or PCR test was taken, whichever test was taken first. Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms), and the next 10 full days.

You may be able to end your self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days. You can take an LFD test from 6 days after the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms), and another LFD test on the following day. The second LFD test should be taken at least 24 hours later. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result.

Face Coverings

You will have seen over the weekend that the Department for Education is asking all staff, adult visitors and pupils in Year 7 and above to wear face coverings as follows:

- When moving around the premises in areas such as corridors and stairwells.
- In communal areas such as halls and dining rooms.
- In classrooms during lessons.
- When in communal transport (eg minibuses and coaches) to and from activities.

The health advice continues to be that children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings. Children will not be required to wear a face covering when outdoors or in situations where there would be a negative impact on their ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE/Games.

All senior pupils must bring at least one fresh face covering to school each day. Please make sure that your child knows how to put on, take off and store the face covering safely. Although staff are not expected to wear face coverings in the classroom, many may choose to do so.

The government plans to review its policy on face coverings in schools in 26 January 2022. Its latest guidance is available [here](#).



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Outbreak Management Plan and Contingency Planning

We will continue to monitor any cases and will react accordingly in line with the Covid-19 procedures set out on our central website [here](#). The website includes our regularly updated Risk Assessment and Outbreak Management Plan.

Due to the number of cases nationwide and the impact on the various helpline teams, the reporting requirements to the Department for Education and Local Authority have changed frequently since the start of the academic year. Nevertheless, we will continue to work with them to adjust our Covid arrangements if there is a sudden substantial increase in the number of positive cases in a class or group in the same 10-day period.

At the point of reaching a threshold, we will first review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures already in place. If required, we will put in place our Contingency Plan for the 10-day period where there are simultaneous multiple cases, including such measures as:

- assisting NHS Test and Trace to identify close contacts
- reintroducing bubbles to reduce mixing between groups
- cancelling or postponing visits, live performances, events, open days etc
- reducing mixing within school of particular groups
- pausing activities such as singing or assemblies for relevant groups
- limiting visitors to the premises.

The government has asked schools to keep any measures to the minimum number of pupils possible and for the shortest amount of time possible. It is unlikely that a Contingency Plan will be implemented for the whole school as we will be aiming to target specific classes or groups in which there is an outbreak. Attendance restrictions will only ever be considered as a last resort, so we will only move back to remote home learning in more extreme circumstances if specifically directed by the government.

Communication

We will continue to call or email parents who have notified us that a child has tested positive. As well as finding out how the child is, this will be to check the timeline of the onset of symptoms in order to trace possible close contacts at school.

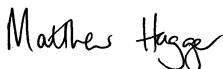
Parents of a group or class will be informed by email when there are two or more cases in that group so that you know to monitor carefully your child. We will also let you know if a sudden substantial increase of positive cases within a group requires the implementation of our Contingency Plan.

The picture looked bleak in December and we planned ahead to return remotely for at least the start of this Spring Term. Now that we know we are able to physically return, we need to ensure that we keep the children in school for as much time as possible by following the government guidelines and public health advice. Thank you for all of your support in doing so.

I hope you enjoy your last day or so with your children – we are looking forward to welcoming them back. In the meantime, please do facilitate a Lateral Flow Device test on Wednesday evening and let us know if there is a positive result.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



Matthew Hagger
Group Managing Principal



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