



22nd November

Dear Parents and Carers,

Coronavirus Update 26

In the seven days since my last letter the school has learned of five new positive test results. One of these was in Year 10, three in year 11 and one was a member of the teaching staff. There have been no new cases in Years 8 or 9 or the Sixth Form. These new cases bring our overall total to 30.

The growing number of self-isolators is also a serious concern. The current total, to the best of my knowledge, is 250. The impact of the self-isolation is being felt most strongly in Year 11, where an infected student will commonly have been a member of five different teaching groups during a single day.

We begin the new week with 125 students in Year 11 at home and self-isolating. In my own French class, for example, I am expecting to see just 9 of the 28 on its roll when we meet in the morning. Many of my colleagues are coping with such situations day in and day out; the effect on teaching and learning is inescapable.

More positively, it has been good to see members of Year 8 have their first experience of our labs and workshops while Year 11 have been engaged with their diagnostic exams. From tomorrow morning they will return to their previous zones of the school.

Today's news suggests that we shall soon be told of the arrangements that will follow the current lockdown. I shall be looking out for any recognition of the potential implications of the date when the Christmas term will end. Very many schools, including our own, are scheduled to close on Friday, 18th December. The COVID virus is no respecter of the calendar and it is realistic to expect that we shall continue to experience new cases during that final week. Nor would it be surprising if new reports of positive tests continue to come through over the weekend of 19th and 20th December. As I have reported, this has been my experience of both this weekend and the previous one. The consequence in December would be, almost certainly, another round of notices to self-isolate. These would run for 14 days from the last known contact; Public Health England would be telling those students – and there may be scores of them – to self-isolate until the turn of the New Year.

The risk of this could be avoided if we were to move to online teaching for the final week of term. Classes would continue for those five days, but in a way which would almost exclude the possibility of notices to self-isolate being current over Christmas.

We at the High School are considering this possibility, along with other secondary schools in and beyond Worcestershire. There is a hope that it may become national policy (as an online petition is requesting) and for the time being I will do no more than sketch out what might transpire.

I wish you and your families a safe and healthy week.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Waters