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10 December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

**Re: Autumn Term, Half Term 2 Update and Start of Spring Term arrangements**

As you will have hopefully seen from other recent communications it has been a busy half term in the academy with lots of opportunities for our students to get involved in many exciting things. We have managed to cope well with the pressures that COVID and the new Omicron variant has brought and we continue to respond to all things COVID related using the advice that is out there from the Department of Education (DFE) and Public Health England (PHE).

**Start of Term Arrangements for January 2022**

Due to the developing COVID situation the DfE have asked schools and academies to test students on their return to the academy from the Christmas break in January. The Government have allowed schools and academies to stagger the start of term to facilitate this. Given our previous experiences in March and then again in September we have reviewed our processes and will only need to make minor changes to the start of term so that this can happen effectively and safely. As a result, the start of term for different year groups will be as follows:-

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022: Years 7, 8 and 11** return at 8.45am. Testing takes place for these students in the academy in the morning.

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022: Years 9 and 10** return at 8.45am alongside the Year 7, 8 and 11 students.

**Consent for Testing:** We will be using the consent from previous testing opportunities in March and September. If you wish to change your consent, either withdrawing your consent or now giving your consent for your child to be tested, please can you contact the academy directly and ask to speak with Kate Winter. Only children who we hold consent for will be tested. I will stress this is the current plan although I am writing this in the days after the Prime Minister announced that the country would be moving to 'Plan B'. Obviously, as was the case last year, if guidance and expectations change over the Christmas break we will communicate these as soon as we know.

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Determined to be...

'the best that we can be'

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**Free School Meal Vouchers** : Norfolk County Council have once again been able to extend the support offered to families with children who receive Free School Meals (FSM) to over the Christmas holiday. These will be issued as vouchers in the same way they have previously been via the Edenred platform. Vouchers will be available from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December and will be emailed directly to parents of students who are entitled to FSM. The voucher amount covers the two weeks of the Christmas break plus an additional payment to support the anticipated rise in energy costs in January.

#### **Last Week Autumn Term Arrangements :**

As we approach the end of term there are several things that are happening in the last week of term that I would like to remind you of:

**Rewards Afternoon:** Some of our students from Years 7,8 and 9 have been invited to our rewards afternoon on Monday. Letters and communication have gone out to the relevant students about this event.

**Christmas Dinner:** Christmas Dinner is happening on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December. Students/Parents will need to have ordered this in advance as per the letters that have been sent out previously. All students who are entitled to Free School Meals can claim the Christmas Dinner with no additional cost. Students not wanting a Christmas Dinner will need to purchase food from a limited service at breaktime on that day.

**Christmas Jumpers:** I am conscious that there is the opportunity to support lots of charitable endeavours at this time of the year and that it can get quite costly. In recent weeks we have supported Children in Need, the 999 Cenotaph Appeal as well as our local drive to support for the care homes and cottage hospital with Christmas Cheer Boxes. As a result, we will have a Christmas Jumper Day and this will take place on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December to coincide with the Christmas Dinner. There will be no cost to students for wearing a Christmas Jumper on this day. Students do not need to participate and students who do not should wear academy uniform as normal. Any student who wish to participate will still need to wear normal academy uniform, shirt, tie, trousers/skirt and shoes but can wear a Christmas Jumper instead of their academy blazer.

**Curriculum Day 2:** Just some advance notice, following a successful Curriculum Day at the end of last month our next Curriculum Day is scheduled to take place at the end of January. Further details and what each year group will be focussing on during this day will be sent out closer to the time.

**COVID Update:** In addition, the testing arrangements outlined at the start of this letter for the start of next term the DfE have asked that I remind parents and carers that students should still be testing twice a week including through the holiday. The Government sees regular home testing as a crucial part of the programme to limit the spread of COVID. Tests are regularly given out to students in the academy whose parents have consented to testing, equally they can be ordered easily and for free through the NHS website. Alongside this the vaccination roll out for children can also help limit the spread and severity of the impact of COVID should a young person test positive. Again, the DfE are asking schools and academies to recommend that all eligible members of the academy community get themselves vaccinated. We will have another opportunity for students who missed the first round of vaccinations in November, to catch up at the end of January. Equally, many GPs and vaccination centres are also accepting children for vaccinations. Again, if you need more details please refer to the NHS website.

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As I reflect on where the year started back in January, there has been so much that has happened in the life of the academy. What has been fantastic to see though is the positive way our students have approached all that that they have had to contend with, given how COVID has impacted them and their education. I am proud of how our staff have supported them to successfully navigate these challenges but I am immensely proud at how our students have shown the resilience and determination to overcome the challenges and continue to move forward. None of this could be achieved without your support and I thank you for the way you have continued to support us in helping your children continue to access their education and make progress in all aspects of their education.

I have no doubt there will be further challenges ahead and that we will have to adapt and respond to the changing situations we find ourselves in. However, I am confident that with your support and our help our young people will continue to achieve well and be successful.

I wish you and your families a happy and safe Christmas and look forward to continuing to work with you in the New Year!

Kind regards and stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Woodhouse', followed by a small dash.

**Mr Woodhouse**  
**Principal**