

Dear Learners, Parents / Careers, Staff and Directors

I do hope that you managed to get a rest at some point during the holiday period and that your children have recharged their batteries ready to tackle another busy term here at LDE.

Unfortunately, we begin the new year in rather uncertain times once again, with the Omicron variant of coronavirus proving to be far more infectious than previous strains although, at this point, it would seem with somewhat milder effects. We need, therefore, to prepare ourselves for a potentially higher number of learners and staff being away from college in the coming weeks. We are really pleased to hear that so many of our learners and staff have now received vaccinations (including a booster) and we have been asked by our colleagues in the NHS to remind you to take up this offer as soon as you can if you haven't already.

The current government guidance for schools remains broadly as it was before the holidays, except that, learners are now being encouraged to wear face coverings in classrooms as well as in communal areas and on public transport. Please could you ensure that your child comes to college with two clean face coverings in their possession every day unless they are exempt from wearing them. We only hold a limited stock here on site to be used for emergencies and simply do not have enough to give out to those learners who forget theirs. Wearing them does make a difference and together with the use of hand sanitiser and regular hand washing we can ensure that we are taking all the recommended precautions to limit the transmission of the virus as far as we can.

In the past we have also seen the benefits of staff and learners taking regular LFD tests. As I mentioned previously, the Government has requested that all learners take a supervised test in college on their first day back. Whilst not compulsory, we would encourage all learners to engage with this to protect both themselves and the wider college community. All equipment and guidance will be provided for learners on the day. I would be grateful if you could reinforce the importance of this with your children. In addition, would you please ask your child to take a test this evening (Tuesday 04 January), the day before the beginning of term. If the test result is positive, please arrange for a confirmatory PCR test and do not come into college while awaiting the result. Thereafter, the twice-weekly testing regime should resume on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. A quick reminder that we supply each learner with enough kits to allow for two tests per week. They will receive a further batch during the first week back. However, it has become clear that not all learners are taking these tests regularly which is a shame as it does help to protect them and those around them. Please note that we are only permitted to order tests for the number of learners we have and they should not be used for wider family testing. Further kits are available locally: <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>

There has also been a change to the rules regarding self-isolation. If you test positive for COVID-19, you must self-isolate as soon as symptoms develop or when you receive a positive test result if you have no symptoms. You must then self-isolate for the following seven days (rather than 10) provided that you have taken LFD tests on (at the earliest) day six followed by a second test 24 hours later with both producing negative results and you do not have a high temperature. If these conditions are met, you can stop self-isolating immediately (on day seven). If the day six test is positive, further tests can be taken on subsequent days, always adhering to the same criteria - that you must receive two negative tests, 24 hours apart, in order to end self-isolation.

If you are a fully-vaccinated (two doses) contact of someone who has tested positive, you do not have to self-isolate, but should take daily LFD tests for seven days. This also applies to people under the age of 18 years and six months. If one of the lateral flow tests is positive, the individual will need to self-isolate and take a PCR test to verify the result.

Please register absences in the usual way. We will offer blended learning (where a learner can attend the class through Microsoft teams as all lesson are broadcasted live) if a learner is absent from class.

At present, we intend to continue with our societies and clubs programme as far as we are able.

Finally, we will be ventilating the college, which means that it may feel cold at times. Please ensure that your child wears their blazer/suit jacket with a jumper and brings a coat with them to keep them warm.

It is crucial that we all work together to keep one another safe and to allow our learners to continue their education here on site. Actions that individuals take can have a demonstrable impact on the spread of the infection which in turn will make a difference to the number of learners and staff that are forced into isolation. Although we are planning for more staff to cover absenteeism and illness - and we will be monitoring this over the coming days and weeks - if levels become unmanageable, we will have no choice but to revert to remote learning for some or all year groups.

My apologies for a rather long and detailed message but I felt it necessary that you were informed of the current situation. Should national guidance change we will, of course, keep you updated and will similarly forward any advice from our colleagues in Newham Local Authority as necessary. Once again, I ask for your forbearance, support and continued co-operation.

Lastly please see below return dates and times for each year group.

#### Wednesday 5th January 2022

Year group	Time to arrive at college
Year 11	08.40am
Apprentices	09:00am
Year 13	10:00am
Year 12 Level 2	11:00am

#### Thursday 6th January 2022

Year group	Time to arrive at college
Year 9	08.40am
Apprentices	09:00am
Year 10	09.30am
Year 12 Level 3	11:00am

With my best wishes for a safe and healthy 2022.



Geoffrey Fowler  
CEO & Principal