

You may be aware that I have been away from school, or partly away, for the last three weeks - courtesy of COVID. I am almost back to full strength and have enjoyed being back in the building for the last couple of days. It was good to see students happy and productive!

Thank you for your understanding during a period when I've been less communicative than normal. I'd like to acknowledge the fantastic work of the staff at EMS who have kept things running smoothly in my absence.

All – FOR INFORMATION and future ACTION – COVID guidance update

In light of recent changes to COVID guidance, we have reviewed our school COVID risk assessment and action plan which has led to a few changes in our Guidance to staff and students. Your webpage has been updated with the latest guidance and a copy is attached to the email accompanying this update. I don't expect students to read the full document again but please be aware of the changes which are highlighted at the beginning, immediately after the contents page.

We are now asking that when a member of a student's household has suspected COVID that the student isolates until a PCR test result is received and they know that the member of the household has not been identified as having Omicron.

Although several members of the school community have had COVID this term, there is no indications that it is being spread in school. Now the winter months are drawing in, we need to avoid the temptation to reduce ventilation in the building by closing windows – this may be one Christmas when gloves, hats, scarves and jumpers will be well received by all!

All – FOR INFORMATION and ACTION – Christmas Lectures

It is our intention for the Christmas Lectures to go ahead at the University of Exeter on the 16th December. To reduce the risk of spreading COVID we are restricting admission to only those directly linked to the school – our students and their families and the staff who work with them.

We are also asking all attendees to take a Lateral Flow Test on the morning of the lectures, or the evening before if that is not possible, and to bring evidence of their negative test result. If you are unable to take a test because you have recently had COVID, please bring that evidence instead.

All – FOR INFORMATION – End of term arrangements

On Friday 17th December year 12 will have an EMC review day; they will be expected to be available between 0900 and 1415. Ed will confirm the students' exact timetables with them.

Year 13 will have an extra day off on Friday 17th December. Boarding students will be able to stay in accommodation overnight on Thursday if they need to or may travel home immediately after the Christmas Lectures. They must let boarding staff know whether to expect them.

All – FOR INFORMATION – Tuesday 4th January

There will be no EMS lessons taking place on the first day of term, although Exeter College lessons will continue as normal. Staff will use the time to prepare for the term ahead and the school will be open. If any students attending Exeter College lessons need a base, they are welcome to come in.

We are holding the date in reserve in case we are asked, at the last minute, to test students for COVID before coming back (this happened last year). We ask that students keep this day free in case we need to invite them in for testing. **If we do not invite students in for testing, they should instead take a Lateral Flow Test on this day and report the results in the usual way.** If students have run out of tests, they may collect an additional pack from reception.

Boarding will be open from 4pm on Tuesday 4th January and we will expect all boarding students in unless they inform staff to the contrary. EMS lessons will begin at 9am on Wednesday 5th January.

All – FOR INFORMATION – EMS in the news

Yesterday, we were named the 2nd best state 6th form college in England by The Times, based on the results achieved between 2017 and 2019 inclusive. We're the only 6th form outside London in the top 5 so rather pleased to be waving the flag for the South West.

Topping the table was Kings Maths School who have been named "6th form of the decade". We couldn't be more pleased with a top 1 and 2 for Maths Schools!

The following link takes you to an article, but it is behind a paywall:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/best-state-sixth-form-colleges-in-england-2022-zq0vhkhs8>

All – Christmas Holiday

We wish you a very happy Christmas! Whether you celebrate as a Christian or not, this is the time of year when families and friends can get together.

The autumn term is long and tiring – everyone needs a good rest. We therefore do not expect students or staff to be working over this holiday. The school will be closed, our staff will be told to stay away from emails and Teams. I'll be setting my out of office to provide students and staff with emergency contact details but will otherwise be switching off.