

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Robin M Bevan MA MEd PhD FRSA



December 2nd, 2021

Dear Parent

On Sunday of this week, we wrote to all parents in light of the updated national guidance from the Department for Education regarding face-coverings, testing and isolation. May I start this letter by expressing profound thanks for the extensive support from so many of you in ensuring a swift 'no nonsense' adoption of these temporary measures. **Thank you.**

Since the start of term, we have been looking to ensure that our provision – in and beyond the classroom – is as 'normal' as possible; although it might be better expressed by saying 'as special as it is normally'!

In recent weeks we have enjoyed a wide range of visiting speakers and workshops: a guest author, in full Samurai regalia; the Frantic theatre; expert insights from the Institute of Economic Affairs ... Our programme of trips is beginning to be reinstated: pupils are off to Bletchley Park, famous for the work of World War II code-breaking team of Alan Turing; to Cambridge for lectures designed to stretch and inspire our mathematicians ... House competitions are back in full force: superb contributions to the 'open format' House Art competition saw animations vie against musical performances, photography, graphical equations and more 'traditional' formats; House Languages gave rise to some of the highest scores ever obtained, with rounds that demanded swift and accurate translation (written and spoken), for example directly from Spanish to German ...

A wide variety of sporting competitions are in full flow ... this weekend we are delighted that school teams have sustained an uninterrupted run of qualification for the national cross-country finals. Many schools celebrate when they achieve just one such national level entry. Southend High School for Boys is proud to hold the record for the school with the longest sustained record of appearances. Our teams will face tough opposition in Cornwall, but we know they will be proud to have qualified and determined to succeed!

In the days ahead, we are looking forward to hosting – separately for each year group – our pupil Christmas lunches!



Covid does unfortunately continue to overshadow much of our day-to-day work. We will be writing to parents shortly about how best we will be able to fulfil the national mandate to see all pupils undertake a supervised lateral flow test (LFT) before the start of next term. The Department for Education has proposed that this takes place on the school site, which would necessitate a phased return to lessons staggered over a number of days. We are currently persuaded that, with parental support, we can secure an even higher level of compliance through supervised home-testing in January; and, in doing so, have every pupil back in lessons on the first day of term. *This will depend on securing your support.*

At present, all pupils and staff are required to self-isolate for ten days if they have a positive PCR. Under the latest guidance, close contacts of anyone infected with the Omicron variant will also need to self-isolate. Regular home-testing (LFTs) is proving to be a very effective route to limiting transmission in school. Although it can be frustrating to return a 'positive' when not feeling unwell; it is far better that we accept this discipline and avoid large scale infections. The numbers of positives in the school remains low and is declining. This is encouraging: thank you for your role in supporting us.

This afternoon, we have been provided with the latest update from the Director of Public Health (Southend). The guidance is based on local infection rates, individual school case rates, and indicates threshold levels at which new measures must be introduced. The document is our "*public health advice with regards to holding events*". I am pleased to say that, based on the finalised version of the guidance, the school appears in 'Level 1' of the framework for now. The Director of Public Health's advice for Level 1 is that "*visitors [are] allowed*" and we can, therefore "*hold events*" as long as appropriate "*control measures*" are put in place:

- ✓ making hand sanitiser or hand-washing available;
- ✓ restricting number of attendees;
- ✓ no attendance of positive cases, symptomatic individuals, contacts of positive cases;
- ✓ enhanced ventilation;
- ✓ enhanced hygiene measures;
- ✓ ensuring social distancing and reduced mixing as much as possible (e.g. sitting in family groups);
- ✓ audience and observer face coverings (including when singing);
- ✓ promoting all attendees to take an LFD test within 48hrs before the event.

We are therefore pleased to confirm the invitation to ticket holders for the Christmas Concerts next week. If you are attending, please be sure to follow all aspects of this advice.

Again, many thanks:



Robin M. Bevan
Headteacher