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Dear families,

Since closing school for the holidays, we have all heard the news of increasing infection rates coupled with a new strain of the virus which is more infectious for everyone, especially children.

We were informed that schools with secondary age pupils would have access to testing for both staff and pupils in January. We are expecting to receive our tests at some point during the day on Monday 4th January. I would like to ensure that all our staff members have been tested using the testing kits before your children return to school. This means that we have to set up 'test centres' at all school site to very specific criteria and ensure the safe testing of over 100 staff. I have taken the decision, backed by governors, to utilise the additional time offered by the government and LA for training to undertake this testing. Therefore, **school will be closed to all pupils until Monday 11th January** to ensure we can achieve this complex task. I have informed all transport providers and they will be ready to collect your children on Monday 11th.

I know this will be difficult for some parents but we hope that by informing you during the holidays, you will have enough time to organise support for your child care needs. I hope that knowing that all the staff have been tested will give you more confidence to support your child to return to the school building for their education. Staff will be tested weekly and the most important function of this is to try to identify people who have an asymptomatic infection. Many people have no idea that they have caught Covid -19 and so may risk spreading the infection unknowingly. I know that all our staff work very hard to stay healthy themselves in order to protect your children. This will be another way we can work together to protect your children and each other.

We have decided as a school that we will be testing all pupils who give consent, at first in secondary and later on primary. I am hopeful that the routine testing of staff, along with everyone sensibly staying away from school if they are unwell, will ensure we can have more continuity in learning next term.

I know that all of these changing aspects of the pandemic will be concerning to many of you and that you may be thinking hard about your decisions about your child's return to school. I would ask that you get in touch with your child's teacher or a member of the senior team to talk it over as I am sure we can come to sensible arrangements for everyone. Tutors will send out home learning so that pupils do not miss out on their education.

Wishing you all a safe and happy new year,

Yours faithfully,

Brett Storry

Headteacher