

30th September 2020

Dear parents and carers,

UPDATE: Confirmed cases of COVID-19 at BOA

I am writing to keep you informed of developments at BOA and, unfortunately, we have now had 4 confirmed cases of COVID-19 at BOA. I am sorry to have to write to you with this news as we have all been working so hard to keep on top of the situation and I have been really pleased with the way students have been conducting themselves around the Academy.

I would like to confirm that I have followed the advice from the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England (PHE) and we have asked a number of students to isolate at home for 14 days, as per the guidance from the National Health Service (NHS).

If it is of any assurance, the seating plans established in classrooms and the 'home group' arrangements in more practical subjects have enabled us to identify students who need to self-isolate, and we are passing on this information to families very quickly.

- For clarity, if a student has been asked to isolate as they have been in direct or close contact with a confirmed case, they will need to isolate for the full 14-day period, even if they receive a negative test result in the interim. Their family members do not need to isolate unless the child in question begins to display symptoms. The 14-day isolation period begins from their last contact at school with the confirmed case.
- For students who have received a positive test result, they must isolate at home for 10 days. The 10-day isolation period begins from the date they received confirmation of a positive test result.

Whereas the number of cases has risen overnight, I would like to balance this with the encouraging news that a further 7 tests results have been returned as 'negative' for students at BOA. I am waiting for Public Health England (PHE) to contact me, as I have submitted my risk assessments and they have acknowledged receipt of the forms. I will contact you to pass on their advice, once I have received it.

For now (Wednesday 30th and Thursday 1st October), I have asked Year 13 Musical Theatre to not attend their additional subjects (A' Levels and GCSE Resits). I have also asked a few students in Year 12 Games Design New Media to isolate at home, due to a confirmed case. In Year 11, we have asked a small group of students to isolate due to a confirmed case. In Year 11, the student in question had last been seen in her core subjects (English, Maths, Science) and we have asked a few students who sit close to her to isolate, as well as those who may have come into close contact during lunchtime and so on. I do not wish to raise alarm by informing you of the aforementioned cases but feel it is very important to be transparent, so you may all make informed choices. At present, we have not identified a link between the cases.

In the immediate, it is important for students and their families to remain calm and monitor their own health. Should any of the known COVID-19 symptoms manifest, please contact the NHS to book a test. It is also important for all students and families to adhere to the guidance published by the UK Government on social distancing, good personal hygiene and 'mixing'.

At the point of writing, lessons will go ahead in all year groups except for those students or pathways that have been asked to stay at home. As this the case, the following are very important that:

1. Students wear their face coverings when travelling to and from the Academy, especially if they meet up with students from other pathways and year groups. This will ensure that, if there are any further cases, we have at least minimised the spread of coronavirus as much as possible.
2. Students wear their face coverings when they enter BOA building, the Old Repertory Theatre, and the Repertory Theatre. They must also wear their face coverings in communal areas, especially around students from other pathways and year groups.
3. Good personal hygiene is maintained, especially when using the toilet facilities and when eating and drinking. Hand sanitiser should be used frequently, as and when required.
4. Students ensure they practise social distancing during lessons, particularly in practical sessions and when they are immersed in group work.
5. Students are cautious at break and lunch times, which can be problematic as students remove face coverings in order to eat and drink. As all year groups have separate lunch times (or separate lunch spaces on certain days) and there is more than adequate space in these areas, students must ensure they practise social distancing. Students must avoid sitting in informal circles in close proximity and that they sit at tables with adequate distance from one another.
6. In the canteen area, students must sit behind the screens rather than facing one another directly. Students must be mindful of the need for social distancing and good personal hygiene, especially during break and lunch times.
7. Students avoid sharing resources, particularly stationery. Students must also avoid sharing sweets and crisps. We have had to remind a few students of this on a number of occasions.
8. Students avoid hugging one another, even though they may not have seen each other for a number of days.

I will be in contact again this week with further details, once I have been contacted by Public Health England.

Until then, I wish our students who have contracted COVID-19 a speedy recovery and I hope all members of the BOA community stay safe.

If you need to contact, please email principal@boa-academy.co.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely



Alistair Chattaway
Principal